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808 Shell Point Place • Landfall • $1,595,000

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1333 Regatta Drive • Landfall • $850,000

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1525 Black Chestnut Drive • Landfall • $1,295,000

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243 Williams Road • Myrtle Grove • $799,000

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1859 Senova Trace • Landfall • $777,000

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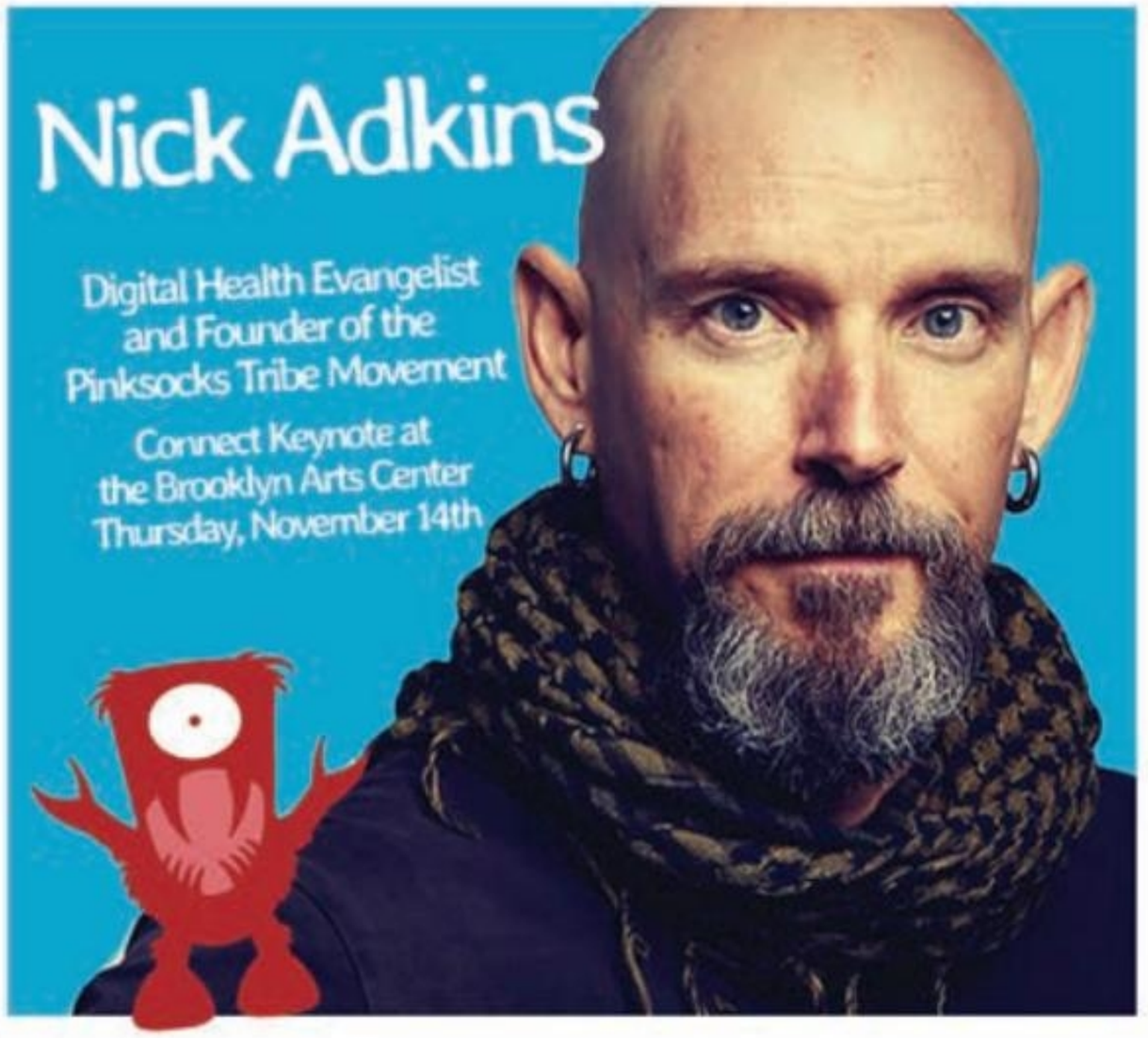

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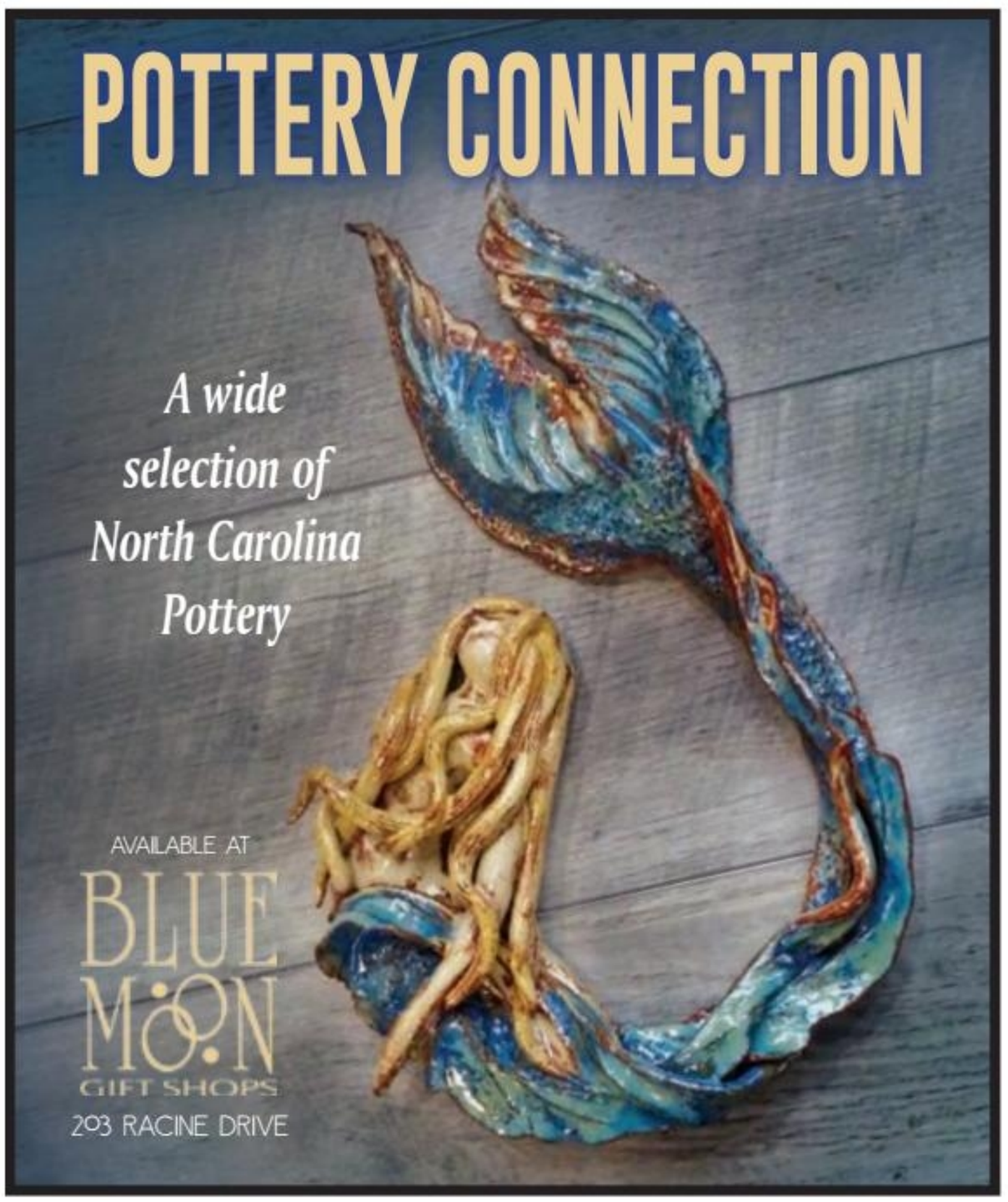

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Above It All

The rewards of life's upward climb

By Jim Dodson

Never lose the opportunity to see anything beautiful, British clergyman Charles Kingsley once advised, for beauty is God's handwriting, a wayside sacrament.

Because I rise well before dawn wherever I happen to be, I stepped outside to see what I could see from 4,000 feet.

A fog bank was rolling silently down the side of the mountain like a curtain opening on the sleepy world, revealing 50 miles of forested hills in the light of a chilly quarter moon.

The only other lights I saw were a few remaining stars flung somewhere over East Tennessee. The only sound I heard was the wind sighing over the western flank of Beech Mountain.

An owl hooted on a distant ridge, saying goodbye to summer.

I stood there for probably half an hour, savoring the chill, an overscheduled man of Earth watching the moon vanish and a pleated sky grow lighter by degrees, drinking in the mountain air like a tonic from the gods, savoring a silence that yielded only to the awakening of nature and first stirrings of birdsong.

After an endless summer that wilted both garden and spirit down in the flatlands, a golf trip with three buddies to the highest mountain town in the eastern United States was exactly what I needed.

A door opened behind me on the deck.

My oldest friend, Patrick, stepped out, a cup of tea in hand, giving a faint shiver.

"Beautiful, isn't it? " he said. "Hard to believe we're not the only ones up here."

Such is the power of a mountain. The lovely house belonged to our friends Robert and Melanie, and though there were hundreds of houses tucked into the mountain slopes all around us, from this particular vantage point none was visible or even apparent, providing the illusion of intimacy— a world unmarked by man.

"So what does this make you think about?" My perceptive friend asked after we both stood for several silent minutes taking in the splendor of a chilly mountain dawn.

I admitted that, for a few precious moments, I felt as if I were standing on the deck of the post-and-beam house I built for my family on a hilltop of beech and birch and hemlock near the coast of Maine, our family home for two decades, surrounded by miles of protected forest. The skies, the views, even the smell of the forest were nearly identical. Sometimes I missed that place more than I cared to admit.

"I remember," said Patrick with a smile. "It was quite on a hill."

"The highest in our town. It felt like the top of the world. My sacred retreat for a transcendental Buddho-Episcopalian who has a keen fondness for good Methodist covered dish suppers."

Patrick laughed.

He knew exactly what I meant. Old friends do. We've talked philosophy and gods and everything else sacred and profane for more than half a century.

"Being up here," I added, "reminds me of an experience Jack had that I would like to have."

Jack is my only son, a documentary filmmaker and journalist living and working in the Middle East. He and his sister, Maggie, grew up with Patrick's daughter, Emily. The three of them are all adults now, birds that have successfully flown the nest. We are proud papas.

In January of 2011, though, as part of Elon University's outstanding Periclean Scholars program, Jack and a few of his chums joined thousands of spiritual pilgrims for the five-hour night climb up Sri Pada — also known as Adam's Peak — to see the sunrise from an ancient temple on Sri Lanka's most holy mountain, a pilgrimage of 5,000 steps traveled annually by thousands of Hindus, Buddhists, Christians and Muslims for some 1,700 years.

Jack had been asked by his advisor to go to Sri Lanka and make a film about the service work of the Periclean class ahead of his own class' project with a rural health organization in India. The resulting 45-minute film, *The Elephant in the Room,* examined the environmental issues of Sri Lanka using the fate of the nation's endangered elephants to tell a broader story about how the world's natural system are under severe stress. Jack wrote, filmed, edited and narrated most of the film in partnership with two of his Periclean colleagues.

As he reminded me the other day during one of our weekly phone conversations from Israel, his unexpected pilgrimage to the mountaintop came at a critical moment of his junior year when he had burned out from too much work and not enough rest. In addition to his studies, he was burning the candle at both ends, teaching himself to make films and working as an editor on the school newspaper.

"When I look back, I realize I was getting pretty discouraged about both school and journalism at that moment," he explained. "But the trip to Sri Lanka came at a good moment because it was the first time I got to make a film my own way about the things that struck me as important, just using my instincts about things we were seeing in our travels. It was a moment of real clarity and freedom."

The climb up Sri Pada in the pre-dawn winter darkness was one of the highlights of his Sri Lankan film odyssey, a surprisingly challenging climb even for a fit outdoor-loving kid from Maine who grew up climbing mighty Mount Katahdin with his mates. Jack and his fellow Pericleans paused on the ancient steps several times to catch their breath before pushing on to the summit. On the way up, they passed — or were passed by — the young and old, the healthy and feeble, men and women of all ages, shapes and sizes, rich and poor, trudging ever

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upward. He told me he saw young men carrying their grandmothers on their backs, others carrying torches, bundles and food — couples, families, pilgrims from the Earth's four major faiths all seeking a common holy mountain top.

"We arrived about 10 minutes after the sunrise," he remembers. "But the whole mountaintop was bathed in this beautiful golden light. We stood in the courtyard of that temple sweaty and tired but also incredibly happy and at peace. It was very moving. I caught some of it on film. The view was incredible," he recalled. "We were so glad we made the climb. It was just what I needed."

Though he's gone on to make more than a dozen timely films about everything from debtor's prison in Mississippi to the opioid crisis across America, my son's earnest and charming little film about the fate of elephants in Sri Lanka — his first full-length effort — is probably his old man's favorite to date, full of simple images that reveal his budding talents.

A year after he made *Elephants in the Room*, his more ambitious and technically refined film about a pioneering rural health care organization in India got shown at a World Health Organization gathering in Paris. His sophomore achievement ultimately landed him a job at one of the top documentary houses before he went on to graduate school at Columbia, met his wife and began a promising career as an independent filmmaker.

I saw a nice change in my son after he came down from that sacred mountain: a fresh resolve, a clearer mind. During our recent phone chat from Israel, I asked if he ever thinks about his climb to the mountaintop on that winter morning in Sri Lanka.

"I do," he replied. "When I got back to Elon, I started to learn about meditation and developed a different attitude about what I was doing. I still think about that climb from time to time. It was an experience that stays with you."

We also talked about the last really challenging hike we took together, a grueling hike up Mount Katahdin with his Scout troop. I was 50 at the time. Jack was 13.

Truthfully, I'd convinced myself that I was in excellent shape for a 50-year-old Eagle Scout. But I never made it to the top. My dodgy knees gave out a thousand feet below the summit, prompting me to rest my weary legs at the ranger station beside Chimney Pond while Jack and his teenage buddies scampered up Cathedral Trail to the summit.

As I contentedly waited, a passage from James Salter's beautiful novel *Light Years* came to mind.

"Children are our crop, our fields, our earth. They are birds let loose into darkness. They are errors renewed. Still, they are the only source from which may be drawn a life more successful, more knowing than our own. Somehow they will do one thing, take one step further, they will see the summit. We believe in it, the radiance that streams from the future, from days we will not see."

Above it all, as we watched the chilly sunrise from the top of Beech Mountain, my old friend Patrick simply smiled and nodded when I mentioned this.

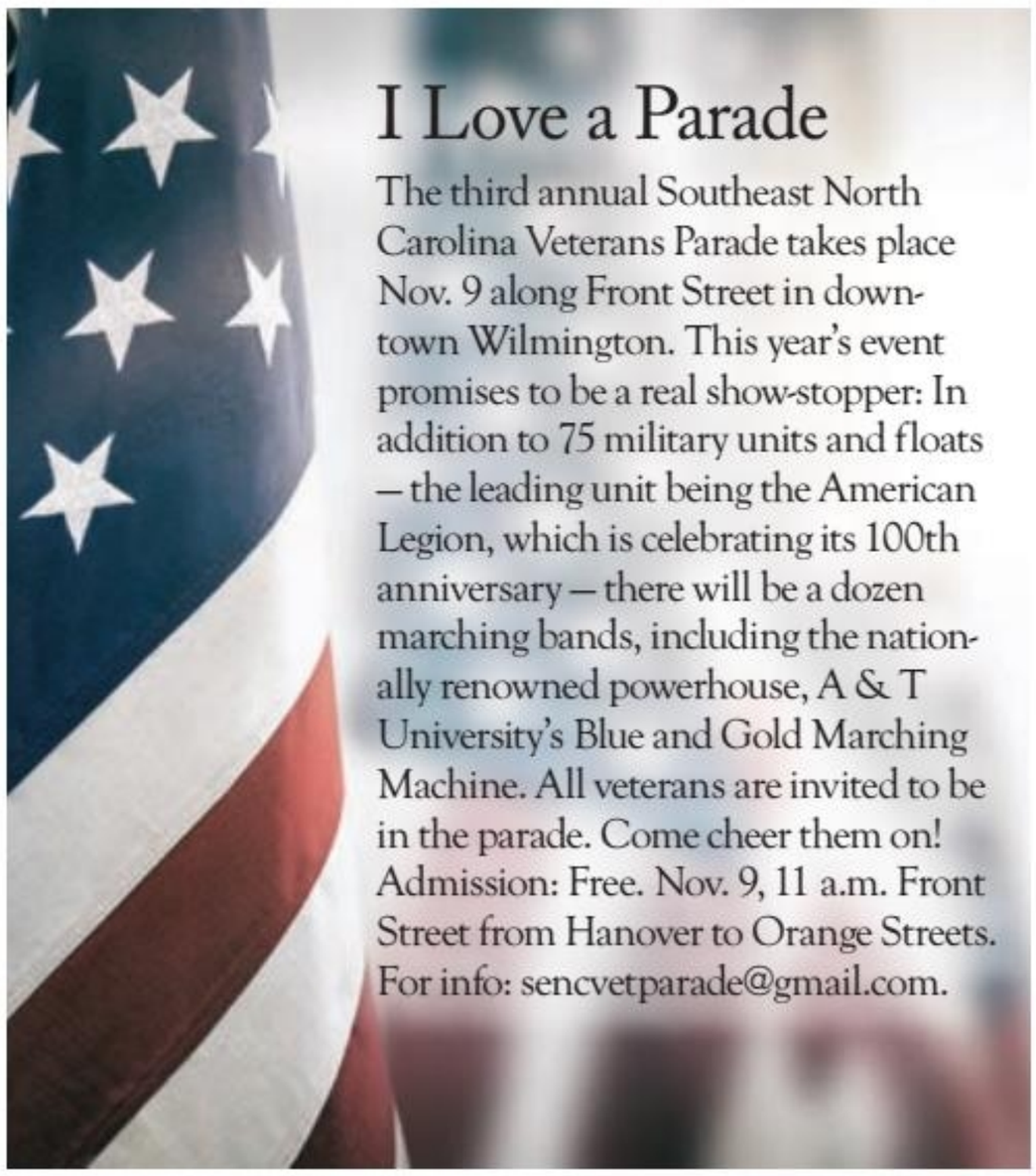
Contact Editor Jim Dodson at jim@thepilot.com.

You can see Jack's work at www.JackDodson.net and The Elephant in the Room at: https://vimeo.com/30460629

SaltWorks

Roast and Toast

Early November is a great time to visit Bald Head Island, and what better excuse than Roast and Toast on the Coast, a three-day celebration of fine wine, live music, and the best of Southern food. Among the weekend's offerings: a traditional oyster roast at the Bald Head Island Club; an open house at a new *Southern Living*-inspired residence at Cape Fear Station; a barbecue with Matt Register of Southern Smoke BBQ and bluegrass legends Massive Grass; Sunday brunch at the Bald Head Island Club. Nov. 8-10. Bald Head Island. For information and tickets: RoastToastCoast.com.



I Love a Parade

The third annual Southeast North Carolina Veterans Parade takes place Nov. 9 along Front Street in downtown Wilmington. This year's event promises to be a real show-stopper: In addition to 75 military units and floats — the leading unit being the American Legion, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary — there will be a dozen marching bands, including the nationally renowned powerhouse, A & T University's Blue and Gold Marching Machine. All veterans are invited to be in the parade. Come cheer them on! Admission: Free. Nov. 9, 11 a.m. Front Street from Hanover to Orange Streets. For info: sencvetparade@gmail.com.

CUCALORUS FILM STAGE CONNECT

Cucalorus at 25

Wilmington's celebrated international film festival has broadened its reach lately. In addition to more than 150 independent films shown over this weekend, there are various live performances on Cucalorus Stage and the Cucalorus Connect Conference, with lectures that explore the convergence of technology, creativity and humanity. Among the film premieres are Jacqueline Olive's *Always in Season*, a personal exploration of the lingering impact of lynching in America, and Marco Williams' *Crafting an Echo*, a behind-the-scenes look at a choreographer's struggle to create a new piece for the Martha Graham Dance Company. Nov 13-17. Various locations in downtown Wilmington. For schedules, tickets, and more information: cucalorus.org.

Karma Camellia

The Tidewater Camellia Club has been beautifying our city through its community service projects since 1955, when it provided pink and white dogwoods, jasmine vines, and wisterias to be planted in Greenfield Park. The club's Fall Celebration and Plant Sale will include a display of members' and public blooms, a camellia plant sale, and a narrated tour of the Arboretum's fabled camellia garden. There will be presentations on early blooming Japonica and caring for camellias. Admission: Free. Nov. 23, 10 a.m.- 4 p.m. New Hanover County Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. For info: tidewatercamelliaclub.org.

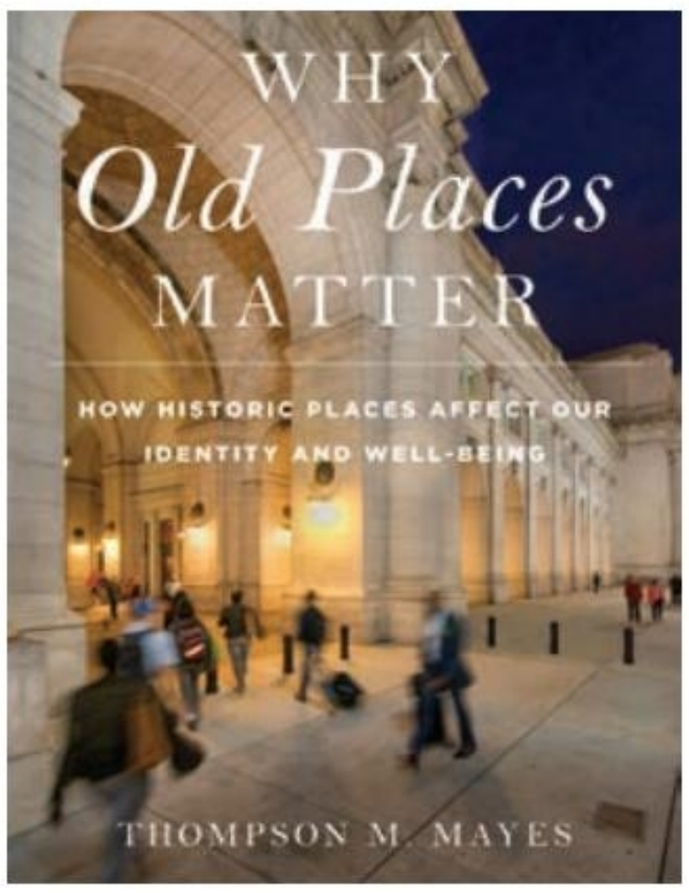
Taste at the Beach

Come spend the evening under the tent by the Bluewater Grill at the seventh annual Taste of Wrightsville Beach, with more than 30 booths featuring local island restaurants and beer and wine tastings. Celebrity judges will be on hand to rate dishes in different categories. Proceeds go to Weekend Meals on Wheels, a nonprofit that delivers food to seniors and disabled persons on days not covered by traditional social service programs. Tickets: $25-$75. Nov. 16, 5- 8 p.m. Bluewater Grill, 4 Marina St., Wrightsville Beach. For info: (910) 262-5998 or weekendmealsonwheels.org.

Holiday Open House For a Cause

Blue Moon Gift Shops and Eclipse Artisan Boutique kick off the season with their annual Holiday Open House, which this year will also serve as a fundraiser for Save a Vet, an organization that supports veteran suicide awareness and prevention. Local artist and Save a Vet founder Tony Vivaldi will donate all proceeds from works sold to the organization. There will be tastings from food vendors, artist demos, art raffles and a silent auction. Admission: Free. Nov. 9, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Eclipse Artisan Boutique, 203 Racine Drive, Wilmington. For info: (910) 799-9883 or eclipseartisanboutique.com.

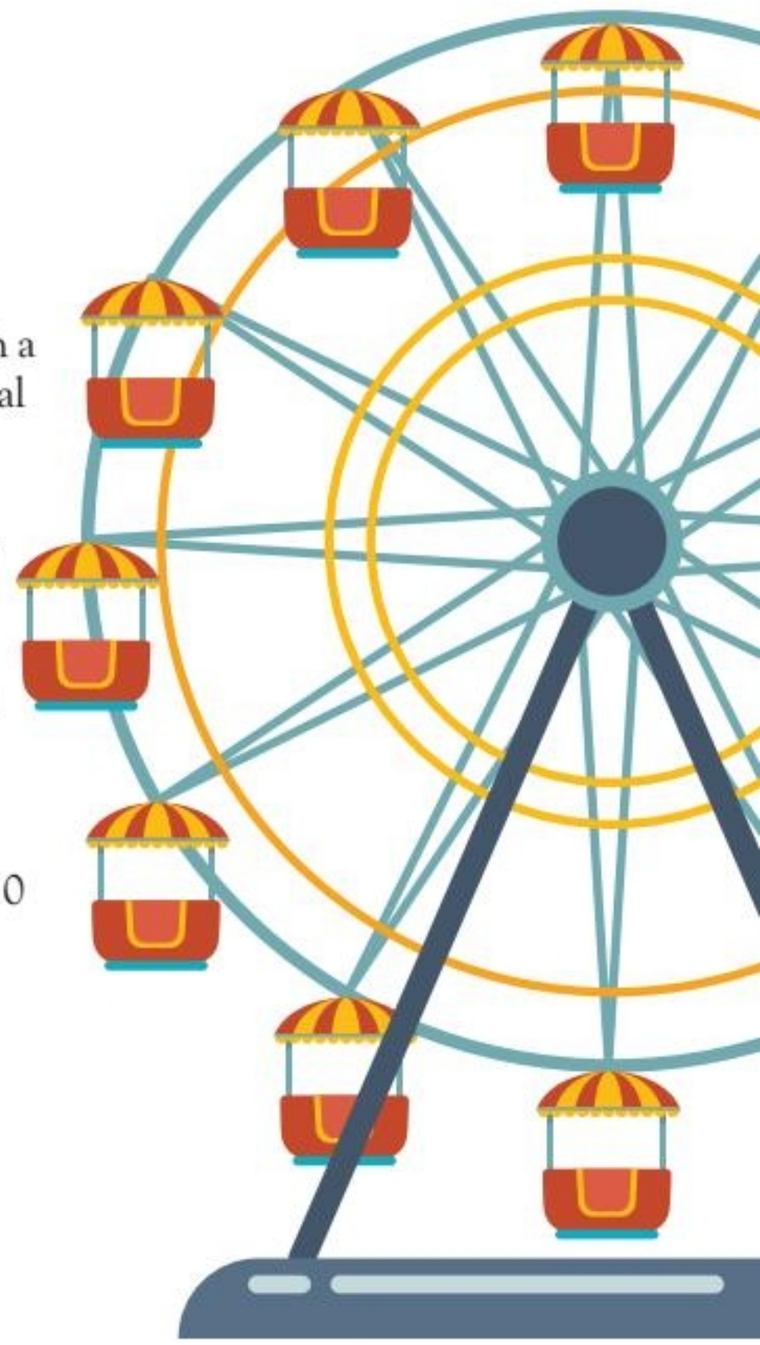
Pride of Place



Thompson Mayes, author and general counsel for the National Trust for Historic Preservation, will be the keynote speaker at the Historic Wilmington Foundation's 2019 annual fundraising luncheon on Nov. 21. Mayes will explore preservation topics related to his new book, *Why Old Places Matter: How Historic Places Affect Our Identity and Well-Being*. Tickets: Suggested donation of $100. Nov. 21, 12-1:30 p.m. Coastline Conference & Event Center, 501 Nutt St., Wilmington. For info and tickets: (910) 762-2511 or middleton@historicwilmington.org.

Step Right Up!

Cape Fear Fair and Expo, Wilmington's 55th annual country fair, comes to town with a midway full of rides, food, animal exhibits, horticultural contests and a variety of events for the whole family. Among this year's highlights: Old McNally's Pig Derby, the Agricadabra Magic Show, Pirates of the Columbian Caribbean, and an appearance by Brad Matchett, Comedy Hypnotist. Tickets: $22. Nov. 1-10. Monday-Thursday, 5 p.m.-10 p.m.; Friday, 5 p.m.-midnight; Saturday, 12 p.m.-midnight; Sunday, 1 p.m.-11 p.m. 1739 Hewlett Drive, Wilmington. For info: capefearfair.com.



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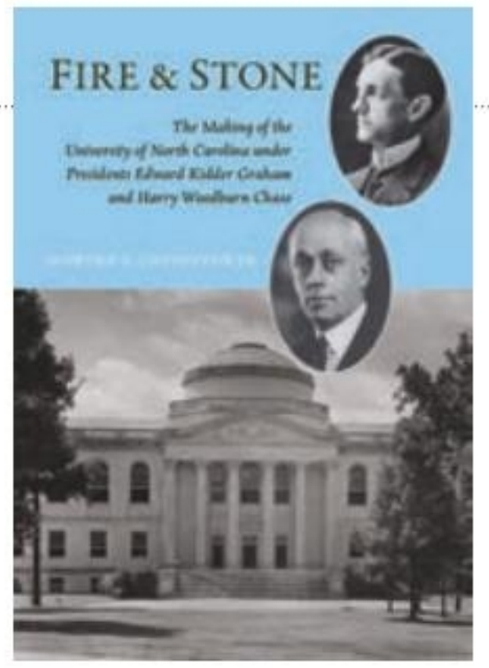
Transformation of a University

Two presidents elevate an institution


FIRE & STONE
The Making of the University of North Carolina under Presidents Edward Kidder Graham and Harry Woodburn Chase

By D.G. Martin

Looking back 100 years to the situation at the University of North Carolina at the end of World War I might give a little comfort to current-day supporters of its successors, the University of North Carolina System and the campus at UNC-Chapel Hill.

The system is looking for a new president to replace former President Margaret Spellings, who left March 1, and for the acting president, Bill Roper, who plans to step down not later than the middle of next year. Meanwhile, UNC-Chapel Hill is searching for a new chancellor to replace Carol Folt, who departed Jan. 15.

Both Spellings and Folt had been unable to work out a good relationship with the university system's board of governors and the legislature.

In 1919, the university's situation was, arguably, even more severe. It was reeling from the recent death of its young and inspirational president, Edward Kidder Graham, and facing the challenges of dealing with an inadequate and worn-out set of campus buildings, along with a post-war explosion of enrollees. Meeting those challenges became the responsibility of Graham's successor, Harry Woodburn Chase.

Graham had been UNC's president from 1913, when he was named acting president, until his death in 1918, a victim of the flu epidemic that scorched the nation at the end of World War I.

The Coates University Leadership Series published by UNC Libraries recently released *Fire and Stone: The Making of the University of North Carolina* under Presidents Edward Kidder Graham and Harry Woodburn Chase. The book's author, Greensboro's Howard Covington, explains how the "fire" of Graham and the "stone" of his successor, Chase, transformed UNC from a quiet liberal arts institution into a respected university equipped to provide an academic experience that prepared students to participate in a growing commercial, industrial, and agricultural New South.

At the time Graham became president, approximately 1,000 students were enrolled. The campus consisted primarily of a few buildings gathered around the South Building and Old Well. Classrooms and living quarters were crowded and in bad condition.

In his brief time as president, the youthful and charismatic Graham pushed the university to reach out across the state. Speaking at churches, alumni gatherings, farmers' groups and wherever a place was open to him, he preached that universities should help identify the state's problems and opportunities, and then devote its resources to respond to them.

Graham's ambitious plans to transform the university were interrupted by World War I when the campus and its programs were, at first, disrupted and then commandeered by the military. His death shortly after the war ended left the university without a magnetic and motivational figure to carry out his plans and vision. That task fell upon Henry Chase, a native of Massachusetts, who had gained Graham's trust as a teacher and talented academic leader.

Although he did not have Graham's charisma, Chase had something else that made him an appropriate successor to the visionary Graham. He had an academic background, and a talent for recruiting faculty members who supported Graham's and Chase's vision for a university equipped to serve the state and gain recognition as a leading institution.

Chase had the plans, but lacked sufficient resources from the state. However, he had an energetic organizer in the form of Frank Porter Graham, a cousin of Ed Graham and a junior faculty member.

In 1921, Frank Graham helped mobilize the university's friends that Ed Graham had inspired. Covington writes, "The campaign had been flawless. The state had never seen such an uprising of average citizens who had come together so quickly behind a common cause. Earlier rallies around education had been directed from the top down, with a political figure in the lead. This time, the people were ahead of their political leaders, who eventually came on board."

Chase took advantage of the public pressure on the legislature to secure the resources to expand the campus. He organized and found support for university programs that included the graduate and professional training needed to serve the public throughout the state, as Ed Graham had hoped.

By 1930, when Chase left UNC to lead the University of Illinois, the UNC campus had more than doubled in size, and the student body approached 3,000, including 200 graduate students. His successor was Frank Graham.

Chase's ride to success had been a bumpy one. For instance, in 1925, about the time of the Scopes-evolution trial in Tennessee, Chase faced a similar uprising in North Carolina from religious leaders who attacked the university because some science instructors were teaching Darwin's theory of evolution.

The state legislature considered and came close to passing a law to prohibit teaching of evolution. During the hearings on the proposal, one such professor, Collier Cobb, planned to attend to explain and defend Darwin's theories.

Covington writes that Chase told Cobb to stay in Chapel Hill because "it would be better for me to be the 'Goat,' if one is necessary on that occasion than for a man who is known to be teaching evolution to be put into a position where he might have to defend himself."

Chase respectfully told the committee that he was not a scientist. Rather, he was an educator and he could speak on the importance of the freedom of the mind. He also countered the proposal by emphasizing the point that Christianity was at the university's core. His strong defense of freedom of speech gained him admiration of the faculty and many people throughout the state.

But his defense of freedom was not absolute. He could be practical. When Cobb wrote a book about evolution and the newly organized UNC Press planned to publish it, Chase vetoed the idea. He explained that the book "would be regarded by our enemies as a challenge thrown down and by our friends as an unnecessary addition to their burdens."

Chase explained, "The purposes for which we must contend are so large, and the importance of victory so great, that I think we can well afford for the moment to refrain from doing anything, when no matter of principles is involved, that tends to raise the issue in any concrete form, or which might add to the perplexities of those who will have to be on the firing line for the University during these next few months."

Chase's pragmatic handling of a delicate situation showed how academic leaders, perhaps all leaders, sometimes have to temper their principles in the interest of achieving their goals.

Covington writes that Chase "took the flame that Graham had ignited and used it to build a university and move it into the mainstream of American higher education."

Without Ed Graham's fire and Chase's stone, UNC would not have become what it is today, one of the most admired universities in the country.

Robert Anthony, curator of the North Carolina Collection at UNC-Chapel Hill's Wilson Library, asserts that there is a wider lesson. He writes, "In this thoughtful, skillfully written examination of the University and its two leaders during the earliest decades of the 20th century, Howard Covington reminds us that individuals with vision and determination can make a difference."

D.G. Martin hosts North Carolina Bookwatch Sunday at 11 a.m. and Tuesday at 5 p.m. on UNC-TV. The program also airs on the North Carolina Channel Tuesday at 8 p.m.

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Full Circle

In praise of the underdog, screenwriter Nick Basta takes on the charmed life of legend Yogi Berra

By Wiley Cash · Photographs by Mallory Cash

In the fourth grade, Nick Basta loved two things: Yankees baseball and making his buddies laugh. While he enjoyed being on the diamond, he caught the acting bug when he made his friends laugh by impersonating the woman in the Enjoli perfume commercial ("*I can bring home the bacon/Fry it up in a pan.*").

Flash-forward a few decades and he is walking the red carpet alongside movie stars like Cynthia Arivo and Janelle Monáe. "I started out just wanting to make people laugh, to make them feel good," Nick says. "And I kept going."

Nick has kept going over the years, and he is a long way from the snickers of his fellow Catholic schoolboys back in upstate New York. We are sitting at a corner table at Slice of Life in downtown Wilmington, drinking Pinner IPAs and eating pizza in the middle of a Monday afternoon when Nick lists all the cities where he has lived and worked over the years: New Orleans, Boston, New York, Wilmington, places just as diverse as his acting roles, but in each city Nick has managed to carve out a career on stage and on the screen.

He attended college at SUNY Alfred, where he majored in ceramics and where acting kept getting in the way. He appeared in plays like *Our Town* and worked with an improv group. After college he moved to New Orleans to pursue a music career, but the stage called him there too. He met his wife, Joey, when they appeared opposite one another in a play titled *Once in a Lifetime*.

"Was it scandalous?" I ask. "The two leads meeting on set, dating, getting married?"

Nick laughs. "No, it wasn't scandalous," he says. "Nobody noticed. There were 25 people in the cast, and some nights there weren't even that many people in the audience."

He found his way to the big screen in New Orleans as well, and he received his Screen Actors' Guild card after a speaking part in his first feature film, *Tempted*, starring Burt Reynolds.

Ceramics, music: Nick had done his best to pursue something other than acting, but now he decided to focus on it. He and Joey moved north to Boston, where he enrolled at Harvard.

"What was it like being in acting school after being on the stage for so many years?" I ask. Nick smiles, takes a sip of his beer.

"It was the hardest thing I'd ever done," he says. "Seventy hours a week of speech, movement, Shakespeare, appearing in several shows at once." He pauses for a moment as if recalling the grueling years of graduate school. "At least it was the hardest thing I'd ever done until I moved to New York City."

After six years in New York, where Nick worked as an actor and Joey worked as an agent, they decided to look south after giving birth to their daughter. They heard about a small coastal city in North Carolina where Hollywood had taken root. They moved to Wilmington, where Nick's first role in a feature film was as "Impatient Bus Customer" in *Safe Haven*.

"The role called for a guy with a Boston accent," Nick says. "I'd spent all that time at Harvard, so I thought I'd put that Boston accent to use."

Since moving to North Carolina, Nick has worked steadily in film and on television shows like *Queen Sugar*, *True Detective* and *Under the Dome*, but he cannot help but be disillusioned by the fact that the industry that brought him to Wilmington now exists as a ghost of itself.

"I haven't shot a movie or a show in North Carolina in six years," he says. "The industry is what brought us here. A lot of great people left the area and moved to Atlanta and New Orleans. It's too bad."

While the film business in Nick's adopted hometown has slowed over the years, the same cannot be said for his acting career. Next year he will appear as Gloria Steinem's editor in the biopic *The Glorias*, starring Julianne Moore, Bette Midler and Alicia Vikander. This

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month he appears in the Harriet Tubman biopic *Harriet* alongside Cynthia Arivo, Janelle Monáe and Joe Alwyn. As excited as he is to share the screen with such incredible talent in service of such an important historical figure, Nick admits that he is a little nervous about his onscreen persona. "I play a slave trader named Foxx," he says. "I'm a really bad dude in this movie, and it was hard."

"What do you mean?"

"It was just an emotionally tough movie to shoot," he says. "There were a lot of tears on the set, and I'm not just talking about the actors. Assistant directors and production assistants were crying because of the things that were happening in front of them. But that made it all feel real, and it's an important film."

Perhaps it is the heaviness of Nick's last two films and their focus on the lives of heroic, iconoclastic women that has steered him toward the craft of screenwriting, and in the direction of one of the most beloved figures in sports history. Last year, Nick completed a screenplay based on the life of Yankees great Yogi Berra, and he has already secured the rights from the Berra family.

"We're focusing on the 1956 World Series perfect game when Yogi was catching for Don Larsen," he says. "And we're calling the movie *Perfect*, not only because of Larsen's perfect game, but all because of Yogi's life; it was perfect."

I ask him if was difficult to write a story about a man who faced very little conflict in what seemed to be a charmed life.

"No", Nick says. "Yogi was the consummate underdog, and no one looked like him or played like him or spoke like him. But he made people feel good. I think we need a movie like that right now."

I picture Nick as that young boy back in New York, doing his best to make his friends feel good. New York, New Orleans, Boston, Wilmington, and now, with the story of Yogi Berra, back to New York, where it all began.

Wiley Cash lives in Wilmington with his wife and their two daughters. His latest novel, The Last Ballad, *is available wherever books are sold.*

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The Saga of Young Mr. Cat

In which Spencer Compton falls for a creature of the feline persuasion

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK HOLMBERG

Upon my word, the most startling discovery I've made while exploring this town named for me is that it has gone to the dogs.

And, perhaps even more alarmingly, to the cats.

I, Lord Wilmington, lived a silken life of quiet and tidy decorum while growing up without pets on our moated and beautifully gardened Compton Wynyates estate in Warwickshire, England, during the 1660s and 1670s. The Compton hound, Sturdy, was a feisty and slobbery hunter who knew his place (behind the barns) and only spoke when on the trail of a fox or nosing out a pheasant. There were a few cats that were allowed to mouse the granary, but they were exceedingly wiley and virtually invisible given Sturdy's taste for them.

And my beautiful mother, Mary Noel, found felines to be insufferably haughty and superior — well beyond their lowly station. "They look at you as if you're on the menu," she'd sniff. Remember, just a few hundred years earlier there had been a mass slaughter of cats in Europe because many associated them with witchcraft and sorcery. (Which likely helped fuel the rodent-borne plague that killed six out of 10 people.)

So imagine my surprise at the legions of highly visible (and audible) dogs and cats in and around Wilmington! Hounds of every shape and size in restaurants, stores, pubs, their heads hanging out of passing cars, endlessly out on walks, excreting, tongues lolling and dripping, shedding fur, licking and barking and whining!

I see dogs on leashes on the beaches, yipping and yapping at every step as if the sand is gnawing at their feet. (To me, it's the most unwelcome sound at the seashore, second only to the buffoons who blast their music as if it's a gift for those who come to hear the soothing sounds of the ocean.)

And the cats! Verily, they just flop and lounge in Wilmington's yards, sidewalks, alleys — even in the street! Every worthless cat now parading as a prowling carnivore is instead just another serial sleeper. They make no pretense of hunting, stalking, lurking, sneaking, catfooting or even slinking away when noticed. They just look at you, slowly blinking, as if awaiting the butler to bring them a fresh tin of sardines and perhaps a cigarette.

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LORD SPENCER

"Don't you have work to do?" I'd inquire, arching my famously hirsute eyebrows.

But all ignore me. In just the 250-some years since I was the speaker of the House of Commons and British prime minister, cats have lost their pride.

Which brings us to the most alarming portion of this rather embarrassing missive to you, my loyal subjects: A young cat has adopted me. Lord Wilmington, of all people! And not just any feline, but a creature with special powers and, I believe, a secret message written in his fur from another dimension.

I know, I know. The sheerest piffle, you are thinking. As you should. But allow me to tell this improbable tale from the beginning, remembering, dear readers, that I was famed across Britain's vast empire for honesty and understatement, along with plodding indifference.

It was a year ago — a windy, rainy fall night with an invigorating chill in the air. I was awakened by a strident yowl. In the dim light from the watery streetlights I could see a half-grown kitten squeezing his way into my Queen Street bedroom through the small gap of an open window. Stunned, I managed to grab the clawing cat, elbowing the window further open so I could toss the kitten out of it and slam it shut. Fancy that!

I heard a bit more yowling, but silence returned and so did my slumbers.

Upon awakening, I made my customary coffee (yes, I have been converted) and stepped onto the front porch to drink it on my cushioned glider. And there, curled fast asleep upon my throne, was last night's intruder. My "ahem" only caused an ear to twitch. So I toed the swing until the kitten awoke and tumbled down, immediately grooming its unusual coat. (Tortoiseshell tabby, I later learned.)

I clapped my hands and hissed, and the kitten raced away, positively bounding in a most satisfying way. "At least this one has a bit of shame," I said before carefully sweeping the cushion clean so I could settle my robed self upon it. But he (obviously male) returned late that evening during brandy hour, making little chirping noises as if introducing himself. Again I shooed him away.

This continued for days. Even turning the water hose on him could not dampen

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his ardor for my company. He switched his sleeping arrangements to the plush welcome mat on the sheltered back deck and, after a few weeks, I found myself having coffee on the back porch, listening to the little mewling chatter with which Young Mr. Cat, as I called him, would greet me each morning and evening.

I was pleased that he banished with alacrity the neighborhood feline bully, Dirty White Tom, who previously felt free to stroll through our yards as if they were his.

I didn't feed YMC, thinking there were rodents he could eat. But as the weeks went by, I discovered that the older couple next door, Richard and Gloria, hosted Young Mr. Cat for breakfast each morning.

And on the other side, my 91-year-old blind neighbor, Jo, awaited his deft step with delicate delectables. "You're ruining him," I'd tell them fruitlessly.

But one day, Jo responded to my chastising by saying, "You have to take him to the vet, Lord Compton."

"Why ever should I?"

"Because he's your cat," Jo replied. "And I think he's got worms or ear mites. And he needs to be fixed."

Fixed?

"Castrated," she explained. "Otherwise our yards will smell like urine and other cats will come to fight."

Young Mr. Cat indeed fought mightily as I packed him into a cardboard carrier given to me by Gloria. Even the veterinarian assistants were surprised at the ferocity of this young catamount. I had to keep him indoors for the better part of two days until the anesthesia dissipated. (He didn't like being inside and still doesn't.) That's when I found he had a profound interest in watching *Jeopardy!*, the only television show I find worthy of viewing.

Thus began our nightly ritual. At precisely 7:30 p.m. on weeknights, he appears at the back door to come in to watch the ever-faithful and royal Alex Trebek. After Final Jeopardy he exits without comment. Yes, I admit to petting him a little. But the only time I allowed him on my lap was the guilt-filled evening after his surgery. If castration helps "settle" male cats, why not humans?

By then I had begun to notice the startling power Young Mr. Cat has for attracting

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other wildlife. First I noticed him chatting with a box turtle that had lumbered into the large, beautifully gardened (ahem) yard here on Queen Street.

A few days later, two butterflies put on such an aerial show around him I had to dub them the Samurai Butterflies. Every songbird typically mortified of cats comes and sings and chirps close by. They, too, show off for Young Mr. Cat with fanciful flights that, from my view in the porch, can only be for his (and my) viewing pleasure. He particularly seems to inspire Exceptional Squirrel, as I have named him. He races to the very tip-top of the towering oaks and then flies from one to the other as YMC watches happily. We've been visited repeatedly by Mr. and Mrs. Mallard and one of those ugly ducks with the most expressive feathered pompadours.

My suspicion of some kind of superpower became a certainty when I saw a manhole cover-size mud turtle nose-to-nose with him. That was shortly after a turkey vulture swooped daringly and repeatedly just a few feet over our heads — such beautiful underfeathers, such a grand flier! — before landing just yards away, proudly pacing back and forth on his clown-shoe feet.

When I'd ask YMC — yes, I started talking to him long ago — about his power over other animals (including me), he'd roll over on his back, displaying his most unusual under-fur. At first I thought he was just being playful, but after closely examining photographs I took of him with my intelligent phone, I noticed distinctive patterns in his markings — dashes, dots, Xs, triangles and scroll-like markings that I believe to be some kind of code that I am attempting to interpret.

Laugh all you want. My contemporaries in British Parliament were fond of mocking me as a dullard and a fop. But Lord Wilmington became (albeit briefly) the most powerful man in the empire. Besides, my loyal subjects, here you are reading the words of an impeccably dressed and credentialed man who has somehow travelled time to a town named for him 280 years ago.

By the way, YMC has grown to 10 pounds during this past year. At his unspoken request, he is heretofore to be known simply and elegantly as Mr. Cat.

–Spencer Compton

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Northern Gannet

Beautiful Divers who spend most of their lives at sea

By Susan Campbell

This time of year, a number of species forage along the North Carolina coast, in and around the nutrient-rich Gulf Stream. Many are large birds that spend most of their lives at sea — pelagic species that have anatomical and behavioral adaptations that make such a challenging way of life possible. The most abundant of these birds in our waters is the Northern gannet. But you don't necessarily have to venture offshore to encounter one.

Northern gannets can frequently be seen from the beach. Some birds will patrol inshore and may be close enough to identify without binoculars. Their coloration and profile make them quite distinctive. Watch for birds a bit larger than our largest gulls (great black-backeds) that are white with black wing tips. Immature birds may be gray in color or blotched gray and white. Like our larger gull species, Northern gannets take three to four years to mature, so their plumage may include a mix of immature and adult feathers.

The Northern gannet is one of the most skilled diving birds in the area. They are visual predators that ascend high above the waves to pinpoint their prey. In winter months, gannets spend most of their time on the move, searching for schools of fish such as menhaden. Whales, dolphins or aggregations of gulls may help clue them in to food sources, but once they find food, they are quick to take advantage of the opportunity.

With powerful wings, they fly some 20 feet or more above the water, and then tuck and dive, piercing the surface like an arrow. Although most dives are relatively shallow, individuals can descend to significant depths. When necessary, gannets can utilize both their wings and feet to propel them over 70 feet below the surface.

One of the most dramatic sights along our beaches is a flock of gannets plunge-diving as if in concert. When bait fish are plentiful, large numbers of Northern gannets will appear, seemingly from out of nowhere. They will converge and then rapidly descend, one after the other, from over 100 feet above the water's surface. The spectacle may last minutes — or hours — until the school has been depleted.

Not surprisingly, these birds have a heavy, muscular neck and a large, strong, pointed bill. They can take squid as well as large fish. Northern gannets ride high on the surface when sitting on the water. Their strong legs and webbed feet allow for good mobility while swimming.

It is also interesting that the North American breeding population comes from a mere six locations along the Atlantic coast of Canada. Young are produced from nests on the high cliffs of offshore islands. However, a percentage of the gannets found here in the winter also migrate from the coasts of Great Britain and Northern Europe.

So before this winter is over, head to the beach and scan the horizon. You may spot a few of these majestic birds soaring above the waves, on the lookout for their next meal.

To learn more about gannets and other pelagic species, all are welcome to join the Cape Fear Audubon Society on Nov. 11 for a special program at the Halyburton Park Event Center, from 7 to 8:30 p.m.

Susan would love to receive your wildlife sightings and photos. She can be contacted at susan@ncaves.com.

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This or That?

What a silly game with my grandfather taught me about life

By Sayantani Dasgupta

Last year, when I was packing for my big move from Idaho to North Carolina, one of the first things I bubble-wrapped were three photographs of me with my grandfather. In all of them, I am between 3 and 4 years old. In one, he and I are sitting on identical cane chairs on the porch of his official bungalow. In another, I am on his lap and we are inside a black Ambassador car, the then-vehicle of choice of all bureaucrats in India. In the third, we are sharing a swing and his left arm is wrapped protectively around me.

Now, by all accounts, my grandfather was a busy man. He was a poet, a bureaucrat, a guest lecturer at one of Calcutta's premier colleges, and the kind of person who gave of his time freely to various boards and committees. And yet, when I look at these photographs, and mull over my memories of my grandfather — right from my childhood in the India of the 1980s to his death in 2013 — what I remember the most is the way he gave everyone in his presence his full and absolute attention, whether that person be the prime minister of India or his eldest granddaughter.

Of course, one could argue that those were "simpler times." There were no smartphones or Netflix or online shopping. And yet, when I think back to my childhood, I can easily fit the adults of my life into two distinct categories: those like my parents and my grandfather, who really listened; and those who were merely physically present.

Lately, I have been thinking a lot about my grandfather's strategies in particular. How did he always make it seem that what I had to say was important? Why did he make me believe that nothing mattered more in the moment than my opinion, whether it be on Cinderella (boring) or ghosts (amazing)?

I am pondering over these questions for two reasons:

One, because I know I can be more attentive to the conversations in my own life. When my husband tells me about a TV show he is excited about, sure, I nod and make the right noises, but my mind also wonders if we have enough spinach for a salad. When my neighbor stops me on the staircase and shares the latest antics of her French bulldog, I laugh but also count in my head the number of essays I have left to grade before my next class.

Second, because I am a few weeks shy of my 40th birthday, and it's making me realize how swiftly these four decades have passed. Since arriving in Wilmington last year and surviving Hurricane Florence, I have been trying to live more intentionally. I have set myself rules such as I can only buy a new tube of lipstick when I have completely exhausted an existing one; I must meal prep (or die trying); I must avoid single-use plastics, etc. In the same vein, I want to be 100 percent present for the conversations in my life. I don't want to sleepwalk through them anymore.

With regard to engaging with me, my grandfather devised a specific, multiple- choice game. He never gave it a name but let me call it "This or That." When I was small, the questions of "This or That" ranged from *do you like mangoes more than papayas to is the Pacific Ocean better than the Atlantic?*

As I grew older, the questions, too, underwent a change. *Should students be taught sewing or carpentry in high school? Is it better to learn Spanish or French?* These, in addition to all the thousands of topics he and I regularly covered — favorite books, my future careers, ideal boyfriend, so on and so forth. But "This or That" always gave me pause. The questions made me think. It wasn't enough to say, "Just 'coz," I had to come up with answers and justifications. I had to explain why the Atlantic was better (cooler name + location of the Bermuda Triangle + the legend of the Atlantis).

And isn't asking questions the very first step to becoming a better listener? Doesn't it show the speaker that we are paying attention; that we care about what she has to say? I was taught that lesson when I was 4. Why did I allow myself to forget it along the way?

Last year, after I arrived in Wilmington, I gifted myself a beautiful, refinished writing desk. It's from the 1950s, when my grandfather was a sharp young man in his 20s, with his brilliant life and career ahead of him. The three photographs of us sit in a corner of this desk. They remind me of my wonderful childhood, of "This or That," and the curiosity I was encouraged to develop like a muscle. They remind me that sometimes the best gift to give to someone is to listen.

Sayantani Dasgupta is an assistant professor of creative writing at UNCW. She is the author of Fire Girl: Essays on India, America, & the In-Between. *She lives in Wilmington with her husband.*

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Flying High

As Wilmington International Airport grows, so does the challenge of keeping customers happy

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

By Dana Sachs

Julie Wilsey: Director, Wilmington International Airport

What is the career path that leads to running an airport?
There are schools that offer a bachelor's degree in aviation management. That's the modern pathway to a career in airport management. I started as an Army engineer officer. I just happened to luck into the job at ILM as the facilities director in 1999, and then I fell in love with aviation.

And you were a paratrooper in the Army?
Yes. I was a paratrooper and a jumpmaster for about six years. I went to West Point and one summer they sent me to airborne school in Fort Benning, Georgia, where they teach you how to jump out of airplanes. So eventually, when I went into the Army as an officer, I went to jumpmaster school, which meant that I was putting the paratroopers out of the aircraft.

Did you love jumping out of planes?
No. I did it because it was an important way to guide my career in the Army. I had expected to be in the Army for 20 years. But along the way I fell in love with another soldier, and it became easier for him to finish his career in the Army and for me to find a civilian career.

You've been at ILM for 20 years, and you've served as director for the last five. What kind of passenger growth have you seen in recent years?
We grew by 12 percent last year, and we're at 15 percent growth year to date for 2019. We added United Airlines, our third airline, in April of 2018. It's going very well. They have a flight to Chicago and two a day to Washington Dulles. American Airlines also added new destinations last year — Dallas/Fort Worth and Reagan National in Washington, D.C. They also fly to Philadelphia, Charlotte, and New York LaGuardia. That's a popular one. And then we have Delta that goes to Atlanta. So we have eight nonstop destinations every day, with three carriers. That's a very strong network for our travelers.

Is the airport near capacity now?
We have room now, but at peak times during the day things get a little tight. We have six gates, and during the morning fleet launch — the first flights, which are from 5:30 to 7:30 — they are using all six. It's the busiest time of day. In fact, 750 people have left this community before most of us come to work at 7:45.

You've embarked on an airport expansion, so what changes can we expect over the next few years?
We're going to have nine gates when we're finished in 2022. We'll see new amenities and a new focus on concessions and services

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in the terminal. We received over 4,000 responses to a survey we conducted in July, so we're trying to get an idea of what people would like in terms of amenities. We take a lot of our cues from other airports across the country of about the same size. So, we'll model ourselves after someone who's having success with a type of food or beverage or vendor.

What kinds of things do ILM customers like?

They love the bars. There's a bar with windows at the end of the gate area. They love that bar with the view.

Any chance that we'll get additional flights?

We are starting to focus on some low-fare carriers. That means we're looking at some other airlines, maybe a twice-a-week flight. I don't want to give names. One of our long-term goals is to attract a low-fare carrier to serve some of our leisure markets and help inbound tourism to Wilmington.

So we might become more competitive with Myrtle Beach or Raleigh?

I'm not sure I'm ever going to match prices dollar for dollar with some of those bigger airports, but we want to make sure people see the value of using the local airport. Your time is worth something.

What do you do day-to-day as the airport director?

The employees at ILM and our partners do all the hard work. The building is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year. The flights arrive and depart, arrive and depart. On a good day, it is a very well-choreographed dance. When I get to work at quarter of eight, the busiest part of the day has already occurred. I catch up with what happened overnight. I attend meetings on behalf of the airport. I speak to civic organizations. Today, I had to write to Senator Thom Tillis on the impact of hurricanes on the airport.

What might surprise me if I went "backstage" at ILM?

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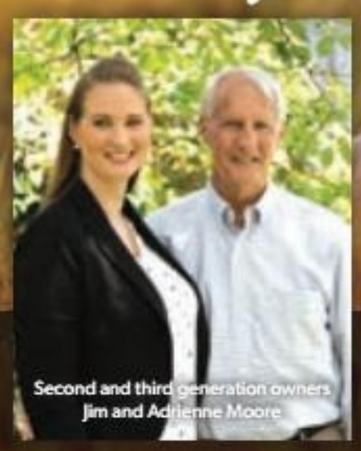
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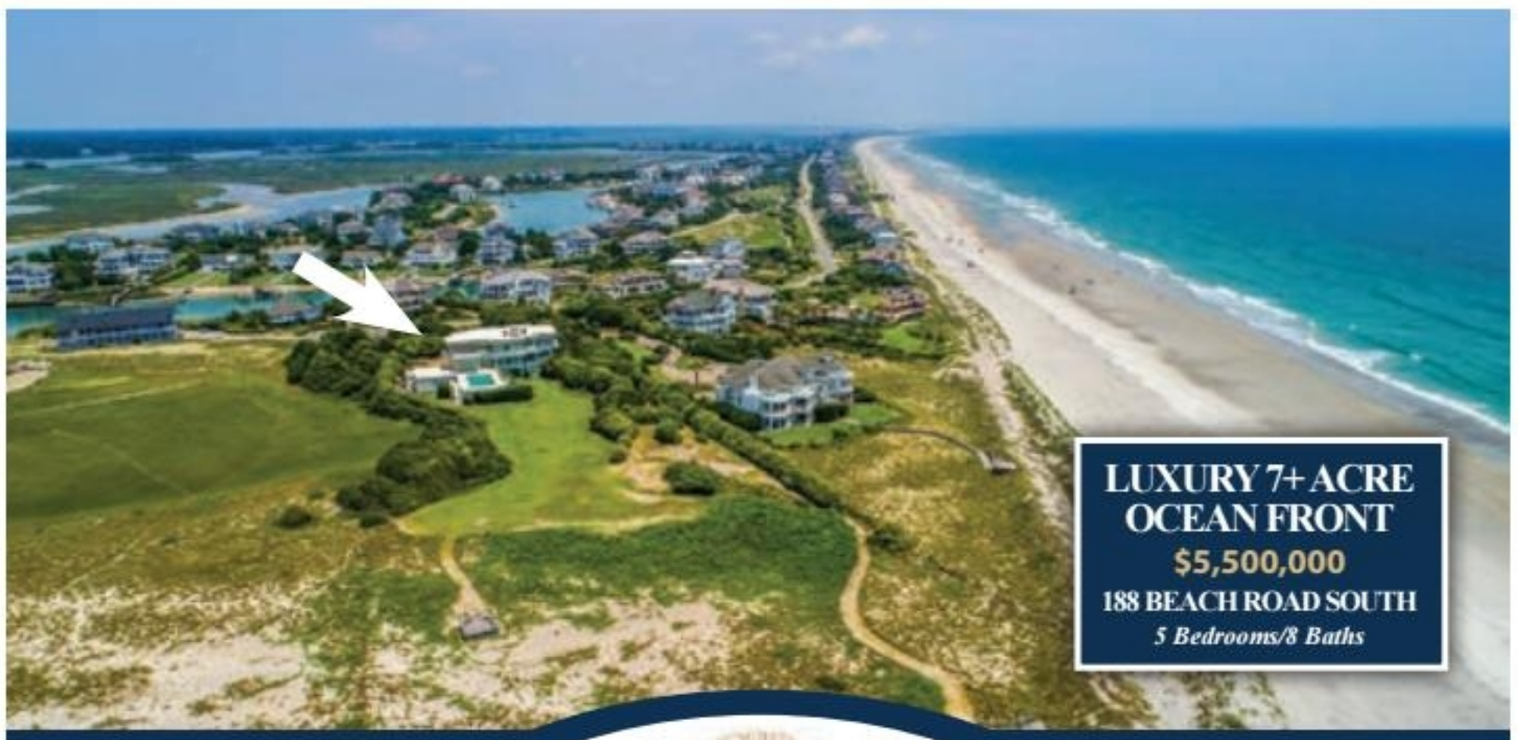

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When you go to other airports, what are you thinking about?

I am a very inquisitive traveler. At any airport, I will check out the bathrooms. I like to see the good, the bad, and the latest in restroom designs. It's very interesting. I look at concession spaces. I judge them. I say, "These are nice and neat." Or, "These are a little shabby." I look at the phone charging machines. And the new seating that has electric chargers. I take pictures of something I think is clever. And then I'll get down on the ground and take photos of the data plates, because that's where you can see the company that makes it. My husband, if he's with me, he rolls his eyes, but he's gotten used to it over the years. I'm an airport geek.

What's the newest thing in airport bathrooms?

Stacked stone. New colors of subway tile. Some of the stalls have devices that you wave your hand in front of them and they release an air freshener. And I always compare the size of the stalls. Is there room for my suitcase? Does the door open in? Does the door open out? I always practice what I call the "suitcase sashay," which is, "How do I get in the stall with my suitcase and close the door?" That's a big deal to a traveler.

When you travel, what time do you arrive at the airport to catch your flight?

When I'm flying out of Wilmington, I have a parking space, but I still get to the airport an hour and 15 minutes before my flight.

Why so early?

Because it would be really embarrassing for me to miss my flight at my own airport.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores, online and throughout Wilmington.*

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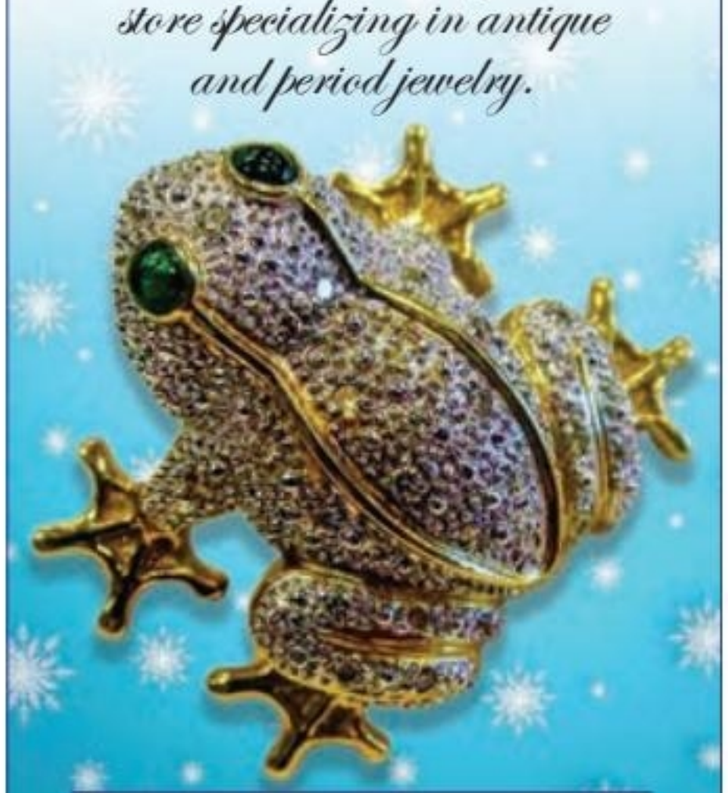

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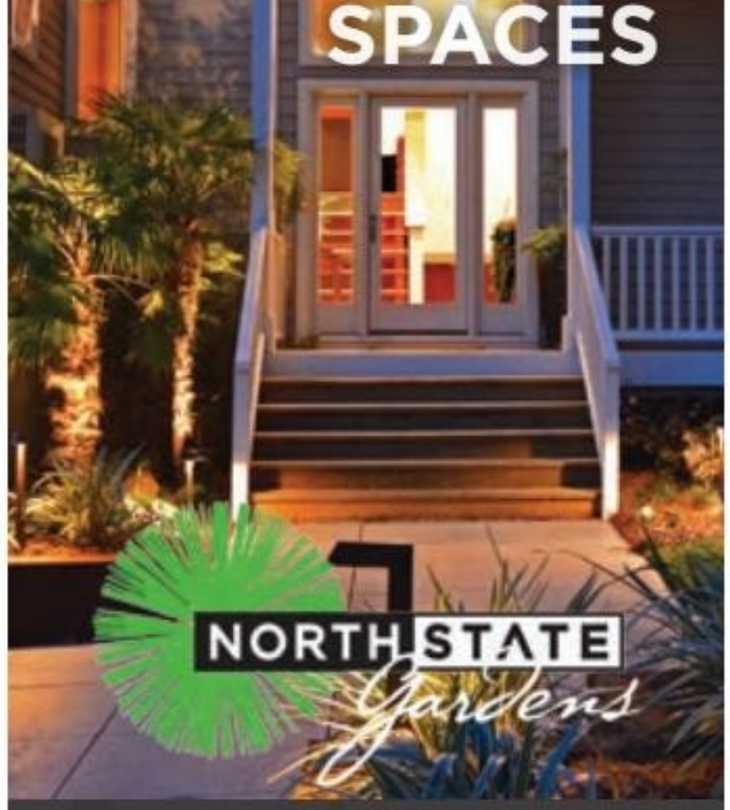

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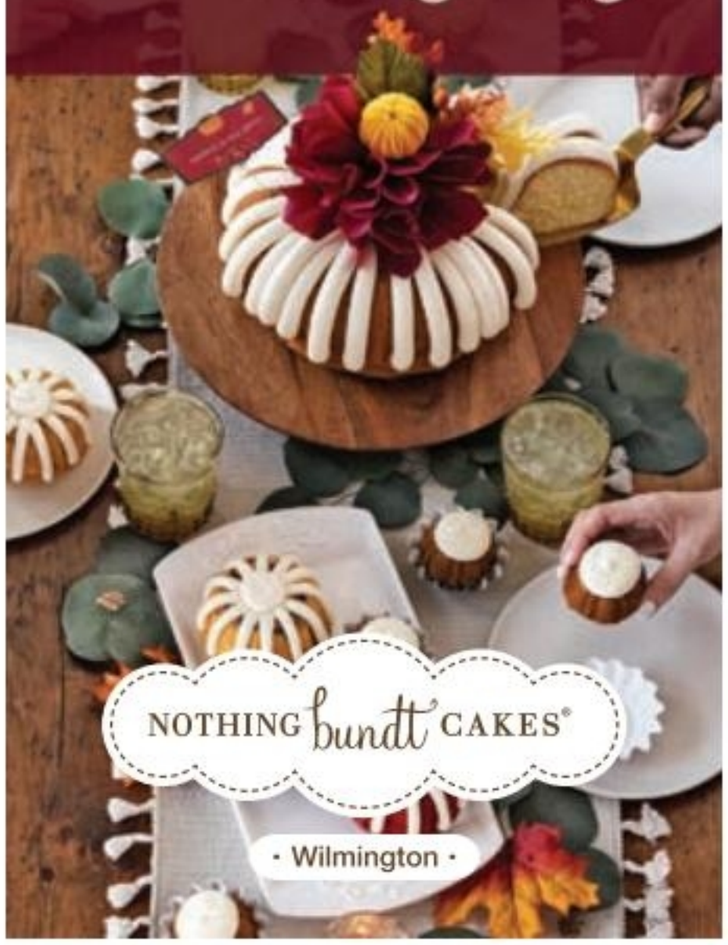

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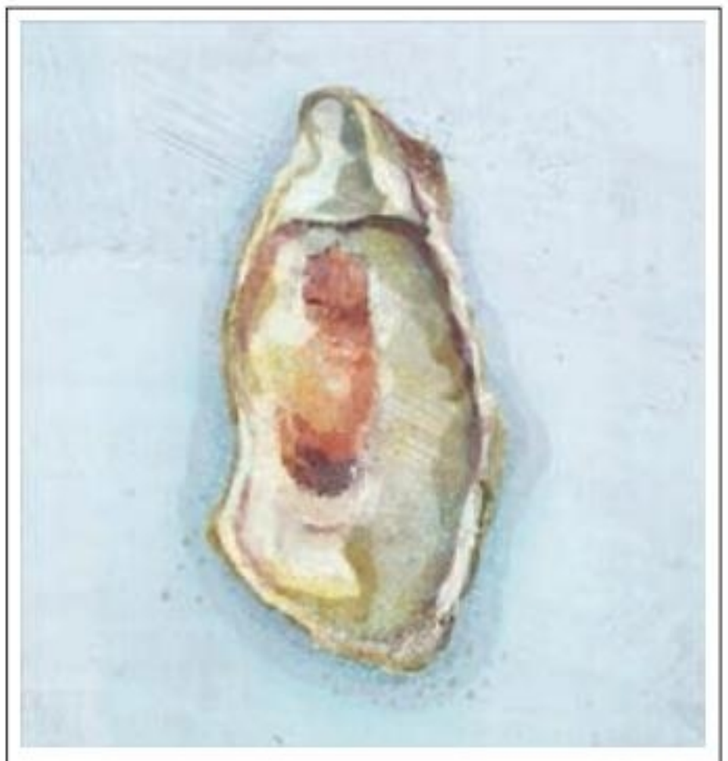

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of semicircular canals
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it's the little noise
we make when
a heart stops.

– Stephen E. Smith

A STAR IS BORN

Once upon a time, in a world of beepers and videotape, a scrappy young group of filmmakers created Twinkle Doon, a collective that gave birth to the Cucalorus Film Festival, which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year.

By Gwenyfar Rohler

It was 1992. Gas cost $1.10 a gallon. You could rent a one-bedroom apartment in downtown Wilmington for less than $400 a month. You could mail a letter to California for 29 cents. Pagers or beepers were still considered high-tech essentials for people in the film business and emergency services. DVDs did not exist — VHS tapes were the easiest way to send out screeners of your independent film — via the U.S. Postal Service.

But in Wilmington, North Carolina, the streets were paved with gold: The film business was here. Money flowed from the movie studio on 23rd Street (then known as Carolco Studios) throughout the community and transformed into movies, TV shows, commercials and music videos galore. If you dreamed of a film career, Wilmington was the place to be on the East Coast.

Downtown was the hip place to live: the up-and-coming arts district that attracted young creative types. Into this swirl 12 aspiring and broke young independent filmmakers waded. They were all looking for something. Little did they know, it was each other.

"We all kind of … moved to Wilmington about the same time, which for me was 1992," Bo Webb recalls. "A handful of those guys had all gone to UNCG together — Kristy Byrd, Adam Alphin, Mark Gilmer, Jungle — and they all moved to Wilmington to get into the business like I did—we all lived downtown. We all just started hanging out together and it was sort of like, 'You want to make movies too?' ' Me too!' ' Hey, that's cool, let's go have a beer.'"

Webb chuckles. "We started talking about what we wanted to make and we said, 'Well, if you're making something I'll help, and if I'm making something, you come help me.' Then it turned into something

a little more formal, and we would pitch each other ideas."

"Some were living in the Carolina Apartments, and some were living elsewhere downtown. It was all downtown," Matt Malloy, Cucalorus Festival MC, agrees. "We all aspired to be independent filmmakers. It was really cost-prohibitive back then. You couldn't shoot it on a phone — I didn't have a cellphone. It was filmed. To do anything of quality cost thousands of dollars back in the '90s. And you had to ship it off to a lab and pray ... .Then it would come back in one piece and you would have to cut it together somehow." Malloy shakes his head.

Jungle Shaughnessy puts it a little more succinctly: "We were all bored and unemployed and had film and started shooting it and making stuff."

From this foment arose the now much-mythologized and greatly lauded filmmaking collective: Twinkle Doon. Like the original Olympians, Twinkle Doon was composed of 12 personalities that attracted and gave rise to something that would outlive all of them. In this case they birthed the Cucalorus Film Festival in 1994, which is celebrating its 25th year this November.

"Twinkle Doon started as sort of a creative outlet for a group of us who started working in the film industry. We all had film school backgrounds, creative minds, great ideas and individual areas of expertise," Kristy Byrd explains. "Working for the studios on big projects was exciting, but we wanted an outlet for our own projects. This collaborative became known as Twinkle Doon — a name given to us by a rather eccentric fella named Tony (Robinson)."

Brent Watkins recalls it as an incredibly happy time in his life. He moved here the day Michael Jordan retired from professional basketball—the first time. "My dad took me a couple of places (to apply for a job). One of the places was Cine Partners. I got a job! Jock (Brandis) hired me! My dad was like, 'Good luck, son.' I had a bike and he gave me three nights at the Motel Six ... I met this guy named Tony Baloney (Robinson), who was an original Twinkle Dooner."

Tony was also working at Cine Partners, a lighting and grip equipment rental house that served the film industry here and up and down the East Coast. Brent wound up living on Tony and Jungle's couch. "For me, I was in heaven," Watkins says.

Some beautiful work came out of Twinkle Doon, including Jungle Shaughnessy's short, *Down*, which was made using the tail ends of 35-millimeter film that he and friends scavenged from film sets and kept in their freezers until there was enough to shoot a short. "Back then that was gold," Shaughnessy recalls. "Now you just stick it on a card and it doesn't matter." He shakes his head and laughs.

But their big break was getting hired to make Rex Manning's music video for the film *Empire Records*. "Rex Manning is the rock singer, and Twinkle Doon made the fictional video for the movie. *Empire Records* is a cult film now, apparently. ...We got $50,000. We spent it all to make the video." Watkins grins at the memory, then runs his hand through his hair. "That was produced by Twinkle Doon on the beach because I do remember that shoot — we had to lay out so many layers of plywood just to move the equipment over the sand!"

But film success — both professionally and artistically aside — Twinkle Doon's real legacy is the creation of the Cucalorus Film Festival.

"The film festival was born from this same need to express ourselves independently from the studio and commercial world," Byrd explains. "We thought our small town should know there are amazing artists and independent filmmaking, not just road blocks for big shoots and craft service."

"Kristy Byrd wanted to do a film festival, and she had far more organizational power than the rest of us combined," Malloy says. "It was her idea, and I was pissed because we were living together and I wanted to make movies! We had this core group of people who were hell-bent on making movies, and we had the energy and it was just a matter of, you know, getting the money together to pay for film and shipping and that stuff. A film festival turned out to be a lot better than whatever movie I wanted to make at that time, probably. Yeah." He gets a faraway look in his eye and smiles. "I'm very grateful for it."

The first Twinkle Doon "Evening of Celluloid Art, a film festival for open minds" took place at the Water Street Restaurant, owned by current state Sen. Harper Peterson, in 1994. "We used to meet there for afternoon *cervezas* and got to know the owner, Harper Peterson, pretty well," Byrd reminisces. "His manager, Dylan (Patterson), was a creative guy we came to know, and he supported our plans to start a festival. Somehow, they agreed to close up shop for one evening and let us show a few films. Jungle made a marquis board with lights all around and voila: We had ourselves a venue."

Would anyone come? That was a real question. Another was: What would they show?

"Kristy Byrd and Brent Watkins did most of the organizing the first year," Webb says. "I can totally hear Kristy saying, 'I'm just going to do it' and it happens."

Webb recalls that first night of screening. "One of them was mine, a thing I did in college; it was called *Capture The Moment*. It was a thing I shot on 16 millimeter." He also remembers a TV pilot about a fire station and shorts from around the state. "I think very little of it was made by members of Twinkle Doon."

Though this was not yet Cucalorus, something very special occurred that night that would create a through line for every subsequent festival to come: Matt Malloy, "a boy who plays guitar," introduced the films — and an MC was born. "The original MC was kind of a flake. A beautiful man. But he wasn't around for the actual thing, and I was like, "I'll do it,"" Malloy notes. "I'd done some talking at poetry readings and stuff. Apparently, I went a little long on the first one because Kristy came up and turned the lights off while I was still talking."

Much to everyone's surprise, it was a packed house for a night of films that no one had ever heard of before. "What a fabulous surprise to have a line around the corner and a packed house for the first night. That is a great memory, seeing Jungle on a stool by the door, next to the bright marquis, and the line of folks waiting to get in," Byrd says.

"We struck a nerve," Malloy adds. "It was like we put together this one night, five-hour thing and the line went around the block. We had to turn away a lot of people."

"We had made a profit of $65," Shaughnessy says. "So we took the $65 and put it in a coffee cup in Kristy and Matt's apartment. It sat there for a year and half and then were like, 'OK, we'll do it again.' And the next year it got a little bigger.

"For the first was a one-night deal the second was two days, made the little magazine and flyers, got a little local press — kinda helped out. We might have made $150 that year. So it slowly just kept going

and going and going to extremes that we never thought it would. I didn't think it would ever continue."

Growth was haphazard and organic. To begin with, the festival got a name distinct from the film collective. "I came up with the name Cucalorus — I can claim that," Webb acknowledges. "It was just one of those funny words I had heard working in the film business, and things had interesting names, and that was a particularly weird name for a pretty plain piece of equipment. I seem to remember it being sort of like (saying) the name Twinkle Doon everyone went, 'Yeah, OK.'"

The word *cucalorus* comes from the Greek for "shadow play or shadow dance." On a modern film set (or in a theater) it would be called a gobo. It is essentially a metal stencil used in conjunction with a light to project a shadow image on the set — like when a heart appears lit behind the lovers at the end of the show.

Byrd and Watkins drove the ship for the first few years, with a lot of people devoting time and energy to make the festival possible. "I quit shows to help Cucalorus. Like I had a job and 'I have to go do Cucalorus,'" Shaughnessy says. "Sometimes I regretted it and sometimes it was just 'keep it going.' Because Cucalorus didn't pay anything." He pauses, then adds, "Slowly it just started getting bigger and bigger, and then we ended up at Josh Heinberg Insurance Agency."

Shaughnessy recalls the need for an office space for a few months every year. "Which I thought by far was the best office. It was tiny, it was downtown, it was quaint, it was really cool. Then I think they let us use a phone. That's how the Heinbergs are, very cool."

"We took a break after the first night at Water Street, but people would stop us on the streets to ask when the next festival was happening. Harper got questions all the time as well. The community needed this, wanted this, enjoyed this ... we were hooked," Byrd recalls. "We all enjoyed doing this festival and came together annually to make it a success. We grew from one night to three days. After about three or four years, we needed more than just our time off from the studios to make this festival happen. It was becoming a real event, and needed funding and planning that took more and more time."

They were also growing up, too. Though in their early 20s and fresh out of college in the beginning, people were starting families, and the responsibilities of adult life called. Watkins exited his office role when his oldest daughter turned 2, the responsibilities of family life trumping four months of almost constant volunteer work a year.

"I feel like Brent Watkins might like have gotten $100 one year," Dan Brawley, executive director of the Cucalorus Film Foundation, says. "I remember distinctly that we all had a pretty heated conversation — I think it was at the Heinberg Agency — I think the proposal was that I was getting $500 for the whole year. And there was a long, heated debate about whether that would ruin the magic of Cucalorus. Hopefully that worked out all right." He smiles and shrugs.

"It wasn't a full year's thing. It would sort of gear up and then run itself down. It was totally volunteer for a really long time. Brent at some point turned it into a nonprofit, which made it easier to get donations, to track everything," Webb explains. "And that's when Dan sort of entered the picture too, when we had the place at Josh's (Heinberg's) building."

Byrd moved West to work with the Slamdance Film Festival. Things were changing.

"Brent Watkins came looking for me," Brawley says. "I was working for Jock, and Brent Watkins kinda strolled by the welding shop and was like, 'Dude, what are you doin' tonight?' and I was like, 'I dunno.' 'So come to a meeting' or something silly like that.

"I think when I first showed up, Twinkle Doon was still the force. But it was the kind of thing that was so magical and mysterious it is still out there. I like to think a lot of the energy still lives within the Cucalorus community — it just doesn't have the same name."

And as with any organization, there were growing pains. "I remember there was friction between Dan and some of the people who started Cucalorus It was tough," Malloy acknowledges. "You don't have time to take care of your baby — but other people were putting in all these hours and it's a ton of hours. I saw it in the first few years.

"Brent stepped up and helped Kristy set up the festival, and it was really tough for Brent, I think, when Dan took over. Because Dan had his own ideas about how to run things. He's really grown it when the rest of us didn't have the time or resources."

In the intervening two decades, Cucalorus has moved to a permanent, year-round campus on Princess Street that includes offices, a microcinema, and housing for the various residency programs they offer to filmmakers throughout the year. In addition to the multi-day fall festival, they host three smaller festivals throughout the year: Tarheel Shorties at the Whirligig Park in Wilson; Surfalorus on the Outer Banks; and the Lumbee Film Festival in Pembroke. "We always have at least one film from Lumbee, Tarheel Shorties, and Surfalorus that plays at the November festival," Brawley explains. "It's sort of a hub like the others parts are feeding into, but also they have a life of their own. There's plenty of people that come to Surfalorus who aren't going to make the trip to Wilmington."

But without a doubt, one of the most anticipated annual arts events is Dance-a-lorus, a live-stage marriage of dance and film.

"I think it was 2005," Brawley recalls. "Suzanne Palmer came to the festival and saw a short film and asked me to come over to the Dance Co-operative and bring some films and a projector. So I just sat on the floor of the Dance Co-operative and played three dance shorts and we were like, 'We should do something together.'"

Blending work by both local and visiting choreographers, Dance-a-lorus is a unique and special event that has grown with each successive year. "We were really lucky that the Dance Co-operative had cultivated such a strong group of artists. It has continued to do that. I am amazed at how that group has been so resilient," Brawley says. "And then over the years, this is an example of what Cucalorus does on a larger scale throughout the whole festival and all the events that we do.

"Hopefully there is an exchange of ideas that provides material for this community, but also kind of informs those artists who are visiting us about what's special about Wilmington or North Carolina or the South. And that I think is a big part of what Cucalorus does: that exchange of hyper-local and global."

Dance-a-lorus is one of the pieces that led to the rebranding of the festival as "Film-Stage-Connect" two years ago. "We've always had a stage section; we just didn't know what to call it," Brawley explains. "We literally looked at the program guide going, 'Hey, man, what are these 12 pages? This is some weird shit. What is all this?' And it was like, 'Oh, I don't know, it's just stuff we do,' right? Visual Sound Walls, Dance-a-lorus, The Bus to Lumberton, they just were all these weird things that we did, that were some of the most important parts of the whole festival. They were the things that make Cucalorus special and different. They were the things that people will remember of the experience years later … so we just felt like those programs deserved some up-front recognition. That they needed to be built into the brand."

The Connect Conference "explores the intersection between creativity, technology, and humanity." Together the three pieces (Film, Stage, Connect) put together a vast festival of events that will bring people from all over the globe to downtown Wilmington Nov. 13-17.

"I wonder what's going to happen," Webb says. "There have been a number of years when we have wondered if this is going to be the last one. Part of it has to do with how hard it is to put on that show and how hard it is to raise the money to put on that show. Every year that happens it feels like we barely made it. We somehow pulled off a miracle. And that's happened 25 times."

Brawley adds, "I am 100 percent confident that 25 years from now you'd be here to do an interview with someone to talk about the 50th anniversary of Cucalorus. It just has that weird energy of something that exists because it has to."

Malloy notes, "I figured it would last as long as people had the energy to put it together. And when that energy ran out I would understand.

"The film business is beautiful. We create stories, and we have life experiences and then we tear it all down! And it goes away … It's all done. The place where you've had all this fantastic memory and it's all gone. It's a natural course of life cycle. So I hope Cucalorus lasts centuries — as long as it stays a positive influence on people's lives."

He smiles. "I hope it lasts forever."

Gwenyfar Rohler spends her days managing her family's bookstore, Old Books on Front Street, in downtown Wilmington.

Heroes in Our Midst

Among the residents of Plantation Village in Wilmington are more than 90 World War II veterans. Here are four of their stories, excerpted from the book Answering the Call: A Story of Everyday Valor

By Becky Grogan, Kevin Maurer and Michael Maurer · Photographs by Michael Cline Photography

ROLAND BERUBE Navy 1944-1946

I was on a destroyer for two-and-a-half years in the North Atlantic, Mediterranean, and Pacific.

I quit high school as a sophomore. This was in 1942. They had bombed Pearl Harbor — the damn Navy was almost destroyed there. We were losing the war on the Islands, and they were really killing us in the Philippines. I was 16 years old, and I just wanted to join the Navy. Well, my folks wouldn't let me. They said I was too young. They wouldn't let me until I was 17. I didn't want to go to school any longer, so I got a job in a defense plant. Then when I got to be 17, in April of '43, my folks still didn't want to let me go. Finally, by November or December they said OK, but wait until year-end. So that's what I did. I joined in January of 1944.

I liked the Navy. I went to boot camp in upstate New York. Then they sent me down to the Naval Operating Base in Norfolk Virginia.

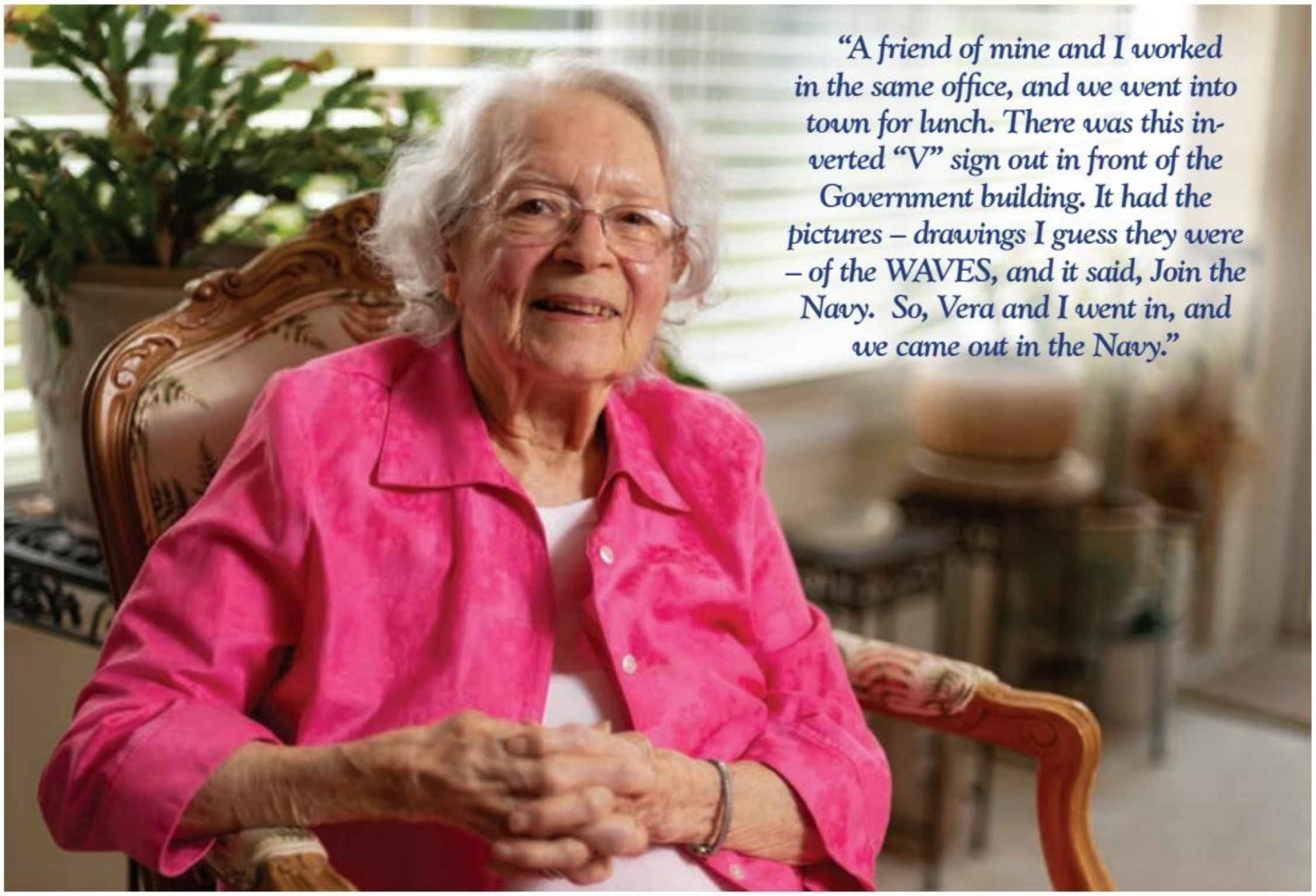
The last night before our graduation, me and a friend went to a movie where we saw Edward G. Robinson in a picture called *Destroyer*. Now keep in mind, we're 17 years old. We don't know beans. The next day they got us all together to give us our assignments. They needed two guys to go on a destroyer — guess what we did? We walked right up.

We had a squadron of five destroyers, and during that time, the Germans were really giving us hell in their submarines. We would shepherd convoys. That went on for a while. Then we got orders to go to the Mediterranean for anti-submarine duty, because they were having a problem, and we had to take care of that problem.

They sent us back home and said they were going to convert us to destroyer minesweepers. So, my first photos of my ship, it has DD-635, but the next time, it was DMS-42. It's still the same ship, USS Earle. We were now a squadron of destroyer minesweepers. We ended up sweeping mines in Tsushima Straits and Sasebo Harbor, which was the Royal Japanese Army home port, and the surrounding areas.

In April of 1946 we were sent back to California. We went under the Golden Gate Bridge, which was quite an experience because they had people on both banks as we came in.

"For me, going in the Navy was the best thing I ever did. They asked me to stay after the war and made all kinds of promises, but I had learned one thing — the guys that are eating in the officers' quarters have an education. The guys that are chipping paint on the main deck don't. I only had two years of high school. I went back and finished and then I went to college and graduated with a degree in mathematics."


"A friend of mine and I worked in the same office, and we went into town for lunch. There was this inverted "V" sign out in front of the Government building. It had the pictures – drawings I guess they were – of the WAVES, and it said, Join the Navy. So, Vera and I went in, and we came out in the Navy."

SUSAN HOLLISTER

Navy Waves, 1943-1945

★ ★ ★ ★ ★★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I grew up on a little farm near Scranton, Pennsylvania. We had two cows — just enough to make our own butter. My mother and I used to turn the paddle. We had pigs, chickens and some ducks. There was a creek behind our property, so the ducks were in the water over there and they'd come over. We had plenty to eat, even during the Depression in the 1930s. I was born in December of 1921, so I've lived through all of it and we survived beautifully. But I guess city slickers didn't survive as well, since they didn't have a cow to get their milk.

I joined the Navy in Scranton.

When I joined the Navy, I was sent to Philadelphia for my physical. I weighed only 100 pounds, so somebody told me to eat some bananas before I went in. I didn't, but they took me anyway because I was healthy. Then we went to Hunter College in the Bronx in New York, and we had boot camp with the women Marines and the women Coast Guard. That was about a month. Then I was sent to the Iowa State Teacher's College in Cedar Falls, Iowa. I was there three months. From there I was assigned to Washington, D.C.

They bought a great big apartment building in Washington. I think it was 18th and G. I was transferred to that living quarters, but there were three double bunk beds in one apartment and there were six of us living there. There were only two of us who worked in the daytime. The others weren't there all the time, just the two of us.

I was in the Navy Department in the Bureau of Ships, the Diesel Engine Section. When we would get requests — they had to be verified in Washington — we would teletype the request to Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, Naval Supply Depot. There would be someone at that location who was privy to where the ship making the request was and could verify that the request for supplies was legitimate.

I joined in about April, I think it was, spring of 1943. The war ended in 1945. I was released in August. I had a limited amount of time to get to the university to take advantage of the GI Bill. So that's when I quickly went to New York to Columbia University. I had to be there in time to begin classes in September. So, September 28th, I think it was, I started classes at Columbia at the School of Business.

I have my business degree, and General Eisenhower was president of Columbia at the time, so my degree shows his signature on the bottom of it. Through Columbia they had a placement department, I guess you would call it that, for veterans. And I took a job with an insurance company branch for Kemper Insurance.

For a farm girl from Scranton, to have the adventure of the training in the Navy, and then being stationed in Washington, D.C., with 30,000 other women, going to Columbia University. I just loved it!

AUSTIN "AL" NEWSOM Lieutenant, **Army Air Corps, 1943-1945; Colonel, Air Force, 1948-1975**

★ ★ ★ ★ ★★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

When I was growing up, I lived near the airport in Winston-Salem, and I could see the airplanes over my house every day. I volunteered to join, and I went through what's called a cadet program down in Texas. And so, when I got out of that I was automatically made lieutenant and got my wings.

I wanted a fighter plane. I went in with three of my buddies, and they all became pilots for smaller aircraft. But I had to go to the hospital, and it delayed me by four or five months.

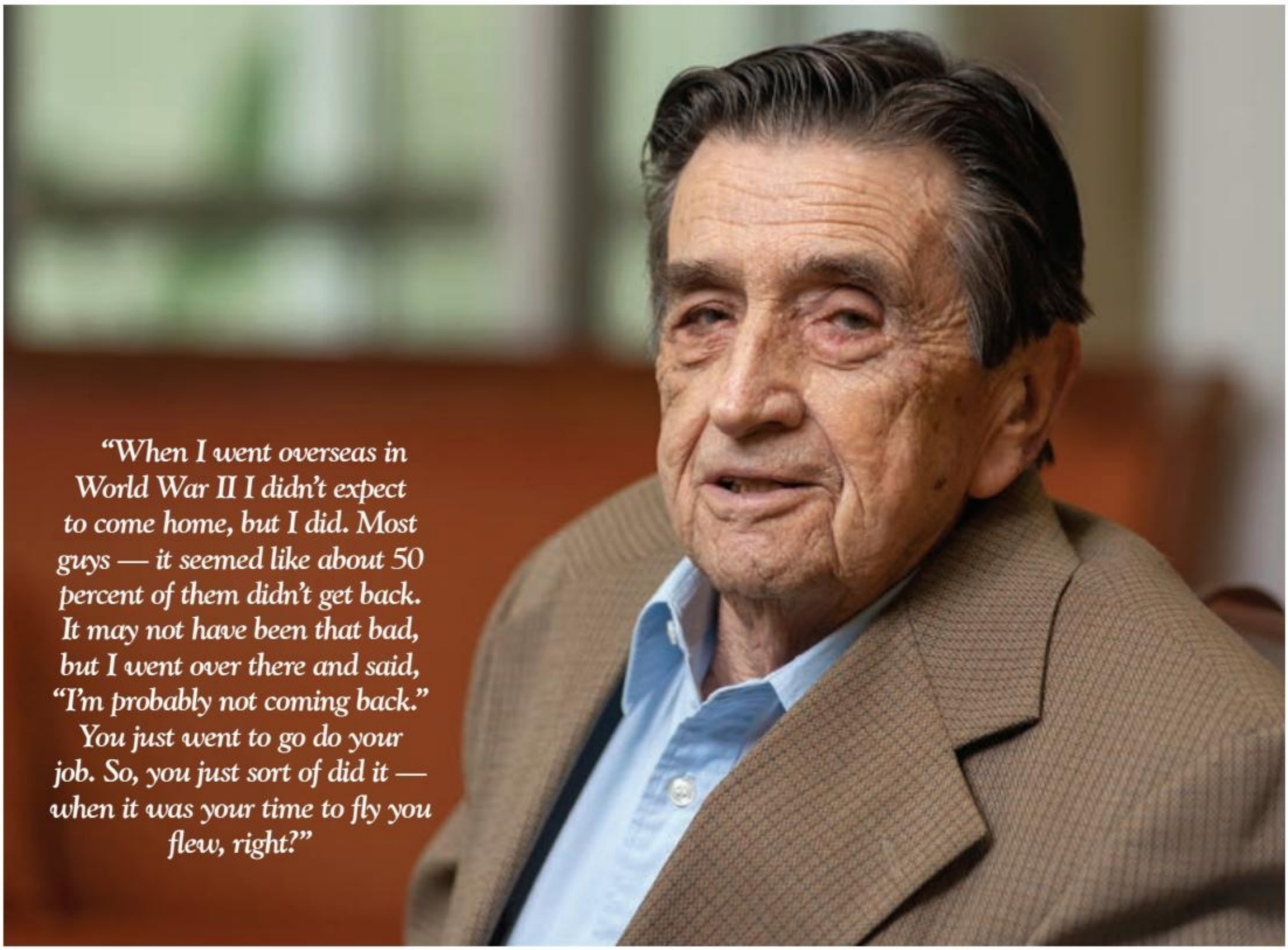
[Newsom was selected to fly transport planes.]

The C-47 is the best aircraft ever made. It came into being before the war. It was just a real stable aircraft.

I was overseas flying when I was 19 years old. We got into the combat action of carrying supplies up, bringing wounded back, dropping paratroopers. One time the Germans surrounded American troops and we went in. We landed in a corn pasture, unloaded the ammunition, supplies and everything — enough for these guys to overcome the Germans. They were shooting at us while we were on the ground, the Germans were.

That's probably one of the worst experiences I've ever had. The most horrible sight was the survivors. They hadn't been fed well, and they looked like hell. And we took them — we made a mistake of trying to give them some C-rations, and they got sick immediately.

After the war I stayed overseas for two years, flying out of Paris. You know, I just thought it'd be interesting, and I was in Paris. It's not a bad place to be. I just decided I wanted to stay in. We had special duties; like one of our duties was pick up these German guys in Oslo — the Nazi German general and take him to the war trials. The best part was when they sent me to Norway for four months, and I learned how to ski while I was there. And I fell in love with a girl. That made it nice. In fact, when I got sent back to Paris, I got the guy in the order room to write out some phony orders to send me back to Norway for Christmas. Not too bad.



"When I went overseas in World War II I didn't expect to come home, but I did. Most guys — it seemed like about 50 percent of them didn't get back. It may not have been that bad, but I went over there and said, "I'm probably not coming back." You just went to go do your job. So, you just sort of did it — when it was your time to fly you flew, right?"

EDWARD DORSEY

Aviation Machinist Mate First Class, Navy 1942-1946

★ ★ ★ ★ ★★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★

I served in the United States Navy as an enlisted man. At the time I was discharged, I was aviation machinist's mate first class. That's the Navy description of an airplane mechanic.

I graduated from high school in June of 1941, and I was working. I was trying to get experience and some money when, in December of 1941, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor took place.

I promptly enlisted in January of 1942 and remained in the Navy until the end of World War II. After I enlisted, I went to basic training; I wanted to become an aviation machinist's mate.

I was assigned to the West Coast at the Naval Air Station in Oakland, California. It was the first time, of course, I had ever seen the Pacific Ocean. I quickly found out why there wasn't anyone on the beach. The water was very cold, which was a shock to me. I didn't realize the ocean got that cold.

After a short time there, I was transferred to San Diego, California, to the Naval Air Station. I was being placed in an organization called CASU-49. CASU meant Combat Aircraft Support Unit. It turned out that was in the South Pacific.

I left California on a troop ship and went to Hawaii. I still remember sailing into Pearl Harbor and seeing the remains of the battleship — the Battleship Arizona, I believe. As I remember it, you could still see wisps of smoke rising from the wreckage at that time.

We quickly left and did not know our destination, but it turned out to be Guadalcanal. We could hear gunfire in the distance, but we did not feel threatened because it wasn't close to us. The airfield there had been activated, and there were airplanes there, and we went to work immediately maintaining and servicing those airplanes.

Eventually, we were notified we were going to be moved, and we went aboard a troopship again without knowing our destination. It turned out we went to an atoll. This particular one had a very large lagoon. One of the islands was big enough that it had an airstrip on it and a permanent garrison.

The fighting on Peleliu was fierce from the beginning, and the troop ship was not able to land us immediately on the beachhead because the fighting was too close. After a few days we were eventually on Peleliu.

We got in these tents, and the fighting, the battle zone, was relatively close to us. It was between the shoreline, then our tents, and then there was an airfield, and the Japanese were entrenched on the other side of the airfield and kept the airfield under fire. So we had to wait for the Marines to push them back far enough that we could activate the airfield. This was a difficult situation because not only were the Japanese determined fighters, but my observation was, they fought to the death. They did not surrender. The battle surged back and forth.

There was a mountain, or ridge above the airfield. Nobody could pronounce the name, but we called it Bloody Nose Ridge. The Marines had to clear the Japanese off that ridgeline, and it was such a difficult task. That has been called the most difficult fight that the U.S. military encountered during World War II. The first Marine Division suffered over 6,500 casualties during one month on Peleliu, which is one-third of the entire division.

The Marines finally pushed them back far — and I have great respect for the Marines. They finally pushed them back far enough that they were out of gunshot of the airstrip, and that we then could deploy the equipment that we needed to maintain and service aircraft.

The Japanese had landing vessels. They would come down the shoreline at night and ground their landing craft, and their troops would come ashore to fight. We could hear the landing craft come down, and they were looking for a good spot to land. Then shortly, when they landed their troops, a tremendous amount of gunfire would break out: machine guns, automatic rifles, and you name it. The Marines would finally kill everybody — and of course some of the Marines died too, no doubt — and you could walk up there the next morning and that sandy cove and the shoreline were littered with bodies, and you could see bodies in the kind of gentle surf there, rolling back and forth in the ocean. For a long time, I refused to think about that sort of thing, but I'm willing to talk about it now.

In any event, this kept on until all of a sudden one day, to my great surprise, we were notified that the Japanese had surrendered and the war was over. That, of course, was a consequence of dropping the atomic weapons on the Japanese homeland. If we had not done that, heaven only knows what a huge number of casualties we would have suffered.

So the war ended, and I went back to the West Coast. I was put aboard a light cruiser and then went directly from the island back to San Diego. The ships were not air-conditioned, it was just outside air. I was sleeping in this cot, probably in my skivvies, and all the sudden I woke up sometime in the a.m., and I thought, "What's happening?" And I realized I was cold, and I thought, "What's this?" It had been several years since I was cold.

The next day, we sailed into the harbor at San Diego. That was a great sight to look and see homes with lawns and shrubbery and automobiles on the street, because I hadn't seen anything but military vehicles for several years. It was quite a sight.

I went back to the East Coast to be discharged. I wanted to study aeronautical engineering, so using the G. I. Bill I attended Purdue University.

"There have been several turning points in my life. One was when I was fortunate enough to be in the Navy. Another one was that I was fortunate enough to survive on Peleliu. And another one was that I was fortunate enough to go to Purdue because I had a very excellent education there."

The Journey Home

In the exquisite relay of life, perhaps we really are where we're meant to be

Story and Photographs by Virginia Holman

For most of our long, hot summer, I wished for fall. Then fall arrived. The calendar indicated the equinox had passed, the leaves on the crape myrtle crisped and littered the ground, but the hot hand of summer still had us in its grip. In a moment of heat-related delirium, I thought perhaps that I had not wished precisely enough: Of course, I'd meant a cool fall.

I coped with the thick heat by cowering indoors by the air conditioning vent and dreaming of moving to another shore — the rocky coast of Maine, where my husband and I vacationed for a couple of weeks early last summer. In Maine, in July, I'd wake each morning, shiver, pull on a sweater, and set a log on the fire. Then I'd drink cup after cup of black coffee while I waited for the sun to rise.

Coastal Maine's rocky, crenellated landscape, its bracing salt water, its looking-glass tide pools, felt like a homecoming, although Maine is unlike any home I have ever known. There must be a word for this feeling — it's not the oblique, alarming familiarity of deja vu or the phantom ache of nostalgia — it's as if an image of the place you are meant to be has lurked in your marrow, perhaps as a genetic inheritance, long before you were you. Yes, that feels a bit strange to admit publicly — it's the sort of out there, new age, hippie-dippy idea I'd expect from someone who's been hitting the kombucha a little hard. But is it really that far out?

Over the last few years, I've marveled at the many migrations we see in the Cape Fear region, and not just those of birds, fish and marine mammals, but of insects. I should be clear: I'm not a scientist, nor a trained naturalist; I'm just someone who had always felt drawn to the shore, and I've spent a lot of time observing the little island where I live.

I first saw large numbers of monarchs migrating through Carolina Beach 12 years ago, when I happened upon a roost of several hundred monarchs in a cedar near the water's edge. Though I knew that monarchs migrated on an epic journey from Canada to Mexico and back, I had no idea they moved through our region in veritable flocks.

It wasn't until I began reading about these creatures that I learned they often fly thousands of feet above us, well out of binocular view. Then, a little before dusk, they descend from the sky to roost for the night. I also learned that it takes four generations of monarchs to make the return journey from Mexico to Canada. In other words, no single monarch completes the journey from north to south and back north. I'd always thought of migration as the headlong rush toward a single destination, and of the migrants as racing toward one finish line only to cross it and race back to cross the next one.

One of our most common dragonflies, the green darner, has a migration that's much like the monarch's. Generations of these dragonflies migrate from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, but the journey is made in segments, each of which spans that dragonfly's entire life.

An article published last year in *The New York Times* points out that "Dragonflies fly the routes that their great-grandparents, long-deceased, once did. They do so without any communication passed from older generations." Theories abound on how this migration is accomplished. One is that migratory information encoded in the cells of these insects is passed from generation to generation, and that the monarch and the green darner navigate by reading the Earth's magnetic fields using an internal "magnetic compass."

It is hard to think of these generative migrations as something short of a miracle, but if that word seems perhaps too magical, perhaps genius is a good enough substitute. Think of it: When you observe a migrating monarch or green darner, you are witness to a never-ending migratory loop that has been repeated for thousands of years. The beauty never stops; there is no destination; there is no arrival. No single place is home. Where do they live? Where we do, using what we most urgently need to survive: Earth, sky, water, sunshine, space.

For a couple of months after our Maine visit, I dreamed of moving north, until one 65-degree North Carolina October morning when I shivered, grabbed a blanket, and thought that perhaps this Southern girl isn't meant for snowy New England winters. Some days Carolina Beach feels like home; sometimes Maine does. I've decided to take my cue from the dragonflies. After all, each place they are in their exquisite relay is precisely where they are supposed to be; a journey home that lasts the whole of their lives and beyond.

Author and creative writing instructor Virginia Holman lives and writes in Carolina Beach.

Gallic Charm

A Landfall house takes its design cues from France

By William Irvine · Photography by Andrew Sherman

Finding a decorator can be a tricky business, and often comes down to the counsel of stylish friends or a visit to a spectacular house and making an inquiry. Raleigh resident Linda Baddour knew about Paysage, the home design store in Wilmington, but she had never met its talented owner, Gigi Sireyjol-Horsley. Then, when Baddour found the perfect house in Landfall, she took a trusted friend to see it. Her first comment? "You are going to need Gigi in here." Crisis averted.

But they were not starting from scratch. The exterior of the house resembles a streamlined, modern version of a French chateau with a painted white brick exterior. You enter through a pair of solid oak doors flanked by topiaries and baroque-style sculptures of putti. Very French indeed. "The house had very modern decorating, and so we switched it all around," says Gigi as we enter the sweeping entrance

hall, where a visitor is greeted by a pair of purple velvet bergeres underneath a large pier mirror.

Gigi leads me down the hall to a pretty powder room, which has been transformed into an aviary with a lively wallpaper of birds. "I added copper tiles to frame the walls in here—it gives a lot of character to a small space."

The house's 14-foot ceiling heights create a level of spaciousness that influences all the rooms on this floor. There is an en-suite guest room with a mammoth bathroom tiled green; the attractive bedroom in soothing creams and greens features an antique French chest. The bed is flanked by a crazy pair of crystal and gold-toned lamps with parrots. "You know who also had these lamps?" Gigi says with a glint of conspiratorial mischief in her eye. "Michael Jackson!"

A formal living room reveals a cool, calming palette — a serene balance of gray sofas from E.J. Victor sit atop a large faded Oriental carpet. Above the fireplace is another work by Peggy Vineyard "but it's actually a framed print that conceals a TV," says Gigi. Flanking are shell-inspired mirrors and demilune consoles from Baker. On the table is a large shell-form piece by North Carolina sculptor Marty Allran.

The adjacent dining room is also a show-stopper, a nice balance of modern pieces in a space that maintains an airiness, with a feeling of French elegance. A Baker table is surrounded by cream-colored chairs by E.J. Victor. But the centerpiece of the room is an over-the-top 19th-century crystal chandelier with bead and flower-form crystals.

On the wall is a large abstract painting by Peggy Vineyard; in the wall, wheat-sheaf-style gold sconces from Visual Comfort.

In the kitchen, one is first greeted by an elegant wallpaper of topiary trees in individual frames. "Linda's mother is from Egypt, and I wanted to find something that evokes Morocco in the design," says Gigi. The kitchen island is dominated by two large custom-made Ralph Lauren lanterns with carved glass, reminiscent of lighthouse lamps. The result is a room that seems both spacious and shipshape. "I also replaced all the hardware in here with brass, which unifies the space and is more elegant," she says.

Off the kitchen is a casual dining room for informal entertaining with a wall of French-waxed gray cabinets and a wet bar with a countertop of ambrosia maple, river-bottom wood with insect holes that give it a distinctive patina.

Both the first and second floors have living spaces that take advantage of the water views of Howe Creek, a tributary of the Intracoastal Waterway. The upstairs is a soothing spot, with a Lee Industries sand-colored sofa and reclining leather chair, the latter looking like the most stylish La-Z-Boy of all time. There is a commodious ice-blue round ottoman, also from Lee Industries.

Baddour and her fiancé, David Dockhorn, both had a keen interest in the design of the master bedroom. "Unlike many men in these projects, David had opinions," Baddour says with a laugh. "Gigi and David worked beautifully together — she would

send him websites to look at and they found things they both liked."

The first glimpse of the master bedroom suite is through a tall doorway with a navy-blue-painted wall, hung with a large Peggy Vineyard painting. A large dressing room with a marble-topped wooden chest of drawers is surrounded by a dark blue jute wallpaper from Philip Jeffries. The bedroom suite takes advantage of its sweeping water views, overlooking a swimming pool below and the more distant Howe Creek. Above the Lee Industries bed with an icy-blue headboard are a trio of paintings by Amy Gaweda, a Fayetteville artist who specializes in cloud scenes of Charleston. And perhaps the best feature of a North Carolina bedroom — a large overhead light fixture/fan combo to make everyone happy.

And after half a year working together (which included Hurricane Florence), client and decorator are still good friends. "And I feel like it's my house, not hers," says Linda. "Which tells you a lot about its great design, and speaks so well of Gigi."

William Irvine is the senior editor of Salt.

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ALMANAC

November

By Ash Alder

November is cold mornings and cashmere.

Before the earliest skein of geese break the silence of the day, you unearth your winter wardrobe, rediscovering the ageless sweater that, despite its annual reappearance, always feels brand-new.

When the geese trumpet across the sky, you are cradling your coffee by the kitchen window, watching the backyard squirrels zigzag like pinballs as they unearth their own buried treasures.

November is time to take stock.

On the back porch, there is kindling to split. And back in the kitchen, one dozen Bartlett pears resemble a Claude Monet still-life.

What will you bring to the table this month?

One dozen Bartlett pears now peeled, cored, and chopped, simmer on the stovetop with three pounds of cranberries, two cups of dried cherries, one cup of sugar.

November is equal parts sweet and bitter.

Your bones seem to know that winter is near, yet your skin sings in cashmere.

Even as the autumn leaves descend, the Earth continues to give, give, give.

Pastel sunrises.

Winter squash and rainbow chard.

Murmurations of starlings.

And camellia blossoms which, despite their annual reappearance, always feel like tiny miracles.

What Will You Create?

Thanksgiving is celebrated on Thursday, Nov. 28. As you craft your Thanksgiving plate with the zest of a landscape architect, consider what you are creating on a larger scale. Are you building a life that is savory? Bitter? Sweet? Or does it offer a little bit of everything — bursting at the seams with color and flavor, yet with enough space for gratitude and magic?

Two sounds of autumn are unmistakable, the hurrying rustle of crisp leaves blown along the street or road by a gusty wind, and the gabble of a flock of migrating geese. Both are warnings of chill days ahead, fireside and topcoat weather. – Hal Borland

Looking Up

According to *National Geographic*, three of the top sky-watching events of 2019 happen this month, beginning with the Transit of Mercury on Nov. 11. Of course, you won't be able to witness what will look like a tiny pinhole traveling across the sun with the naked eye, nor should you attempt this without safety precautions (eclipse glasses, solar binoculars, solar filters, etc.). According to the article, "This will be the last transit of Mercury available to North Americans until May 7, 2049."

On Sunday, Nov. 24, don't miss brilliant luminaries Venus and Jupiter close as ever in the southwest horizon — just 1.4 degrees apart. And on Thanksgiving Day, 45 minutes after sundown, take another look low in the southwestern sky and see what *National Geographic* calls the "celestial summit meeting" of Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, and a hairline crescent moon.

The Power of Gratitude

The correlation between gratitude and happiness was common sense long before it was research material. And yet, time and again, psychologists' findings support what poets and sages of the ages have long been conveying: Gratitude is good for you.

Moreover, it can radically change your life.

A recent article by Harvard Medical School's *Harvard Health Publishing* offers six simple practices for cultivating gratitude:

1. Write a thank-you note.
2. Thank someone mentally.
3. Keep a gratitude journal.
4. Count your blessings.
5. Pray.
6. Meditate.

And while we're on the subject, here are three powerful quotes on gratitude that suggest its utter potency:

"Acknowledging the good that you already have in your life is the foundation for all abundance." — Eckhart Tolle

"We need to learn to want what we have, not to have what we want, in order to get stable and steady happiness." — Dalai Lama

"Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more. If you concentrate on what you don't have, you will never, ever have enough." — Oprah Winfrey

Happy Thanksgiving!

Arts Calendar

Cape Fear Kite Festival

11/2-3

Holiday Market

11/16

Habitat for Humanity Turkey Trot

11/28

To add a calendar event, please contact calendar@saltmagazinenc.com. Events must be submitted by the first of the month, one month prior to the event.

11/1-3 Art in the Arboretum

10 a.m. - 4 p.m. More than 100 regional artists will exhibit paintings, prints, pottery and other media. There will also be a silent auction, raffle and live music. Admission: $5. New Hanover County Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7660 or arboretum.nhcgov.com.

11/1-3 Coastal Carolina Clay Guild Holiday Show and Sale

Friday, 5-8 p.m.; Saturday-Sunday, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. On display will be the work of 15 Clay Guild members from throughout southeastern North Carolina. Admission: Free. Community Arts Center, 120 S. Second St., Wilmington. For info: (910) 681-0900 or coastalcarolinaclayguild.org.

11/1-11/10 Cape Fear Fair & Expo

Monday - Thursday, 5 p.m.-10 p.m.; Friday, 5 p.m. - Midnight; Saturday, 12 p.m. - Midnight; Sunday, 1 p.m.-11 p.m. The Cape Fear Fair & Expo features livestock exhibits, horticultural contests, rides, activities for children, and more. Admission: $22. Wilmington International Airport, 1740 Airport Blvd., Wilmington. For info: (910) 313-1234 or capefearfair.com.

11/2 21st Annual Polish Festival

11 a.m.- 5 p.m. This annual celebration of all things Polish features polka dancing, crafts, live and silent auctions, and authentic foods such as kielbasa and pierogis. Featuring the Chardon Polka Band from Ohio. Admission: Free. St. Stanislaus Catholic Church, 4849 Castle Hayne Rd., Castle Hayne. Info: ststanspolishfestival.org.

11/2 49th Annual Kiwanis Pancake Breakfast

6:30 a.m. This year's breakfast menu features all-you-can-eat pancakes, sausages, coffee and juice or milk to benefit the Kiwanis Club of Wilmington. Admission: $6. Hoggard High School, 4305 Shipyard Blvd., Wilmington. For info: (910) 791-9092 or wilmingtonkiwanis.org.

11/2 Women's Expo

11 a.m. - 3 p.m. Roots of Recovery and Women in Networking present Women's Expo, which features multiple vendors, presentations, and food. Admission: Free. Olde Point Golf Club, 513 Country Club Drive, Hampstead. For info: (910) 508-6923 or rootsofrecovery.org.

11/2 & 3 Cape Fear Kite Festival

10 a.m. - 4 p.m. Come fly a kite at this annual two-day festival, which is open to all kite-flyers of varying skill levels. Admission: Free. Fort Fisher State Recreation Area, 1000 Loggerhead Rd., Kure Beach. Info: (910) 520-1818 or capefearkitefestival.org.

11/2 & 3 Surf to Sound North Carolina

A weekend of SUP races, demonstrations and clinics sponsored by the Wilmington Beach Paddle

Club. There will be live music and beer tasting. Various race times. Check website for details. Blockade Runner Beach Resort, 275 Waynick Blvd., Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-2251 or wrightsvillebeachpaddleclub.com.

11/3 Battleship Half Marathon 10K and 5K

8 a.m. All three races commence and finish at the Battleship North Carolina. Admission: $25-$60. Battleship North Carolina, 2 Battleship Rd., Wilmington. Info: runsignup.com/Race/NC/Wilmington/BattleshipHalfMarathon.

11/3 Chamber Music Wilmington Concert

4 p.m. This concert will feature the Italian string quartet Quartetto di Cremona in a a program of works by Respighi, Verdi, and Puccini. Admission: $30. Beckwith Recital Hall, UNCW, 5270 Randall Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or chambermusicwilmington.org.

11/3 Jazzmeia Horn in Concert

3 p.m. The Grammy-award-nominated jazz vocalist performs a special matinee concert this afternoon. Admission: $20-$50. Kenan Auditorium, UNCW, 515 Wagoner Drive, Wilmington. For info: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/arts/presents/2019-2020/jazzmeia.html.

11/3 The MozArt Group

3 p.m. Four classically trained musicians with a humorous touch. Admission: $15-$50. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or thalianhall.org.

11/7 Jazz at the Cam

6:30 p.m.- 8 p.m. The Ron Brendle Quartet performs. Admission: $12-$25. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 S. 17th St., Wilmington. Info: cameronartmuseum.org.

11/8 The Arty Party

6 p.m. - 9 p.m. The Arty Party is an evening of special performances and artwork with lots of great food and drinks. Proceeds benefit the Arts Council of Wilmington/New Hanover County. Admission: $100. KGB ILM, 16 Princess Street, Wilmington. For info: artscouncilofwilmington.org.

11/9 An Evening With The Drifters

7:30 p.m. The Drifters were the first African-American group to enter the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, and tonight they will perform their legendary R & B hits, including There Goes My Baby and Under the Boardwalk. Admission: $15-$75. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or thalianhall.org.

11/9 Holiday Open House

10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Blue Moon Gift Shops and Eclipse Artisan Boutique kick off the season with their Holiday Open House, featuring food vendors, raffles, and a silent auction. Admission: Free. Donations will benefit veteran suicide awareness and prevention. Eclipse Artisan Boutique, 203 Racine Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 799-9883.

11/9 UNCW iFest

12 p.m. - 4 p.m. The Intercultural Festival features professional and student performers from all over the world as well as informational displays from more than 40 countries. Admission: Free. UNCW Lumina Theater, 601 S. College Rd., Wilmington. For info: (910) 962-7813 or uncw.edu/international/isss/ifest.html.

11/9 7th Annual Holiday Craft Show

9 a.m. - 4 p.m. American Legion Post 129 in Carolina Beach hosts its 7th annual craft show with a variety of displays from local artisans. Admission: Free. American Legion Post 129, 1500 Bridge Barrier Rd., Carolina Beach. For info: (910) 458-9155.

11/9 66th Annual Bargain Sale

Friday, 6 - 9 p.m.; Saturday, 7:30 a.m.- 1:30 p.m. The Junior League of Wilmington's 66th Annual Bargain Sale features new and gently used furniture, housewares, sporting goods, electronics, clothing and more, as well as new items from Wilmington shops sold at deep discount. Admission: $5-$15. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. For info: jlwnc.org.

11/13-17 25th Annual Cucalorus Film Festival

More than 150 films, dance performances, stage events and a tech conference take place all over town this weekend. See schedule for individual pricing and events. Admission: $10-$750. Various venues. For info: cucalorus.org/cucalorus-festival.

11/14-17 Darkness: The Enemy Inside

8 p.m.; Sunday at 2 p.m. Darkness: The Enemy Inside, a collaboration by five European playwrights, explores Scandinavian society and existential crises. Admission: $6-$15. Cultural Arts Building, UNCW, 5270 Randall Drive, Wilmington. For info: (910) 962-3500 or uncw.edu/theatre.

11/16 Wilmington Symphony Orchestra

7:30 p.m. Tonight's performance is an evening of Latin Soul with the Austin Piazzolla Quintet in a concert that features El Amor Bujo by De Falla. Admission: $17-$47. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third

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Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or wilmingtonsymphony.org/latin-soul.html.

11/16 7th Annual Taste of Wrightsville Beach

5 p.m.-8 p.m. Come celebrate Wrightsville Beach's fine restaurants with booths from more than 35 local vendors of food, wine and beer. Celebrity judges will rate the dishes in several categories. A benefit for the Weekend Meals on Wheels program. Admission: $75. Bluewater Grill, 4 Marina St., Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 262-5998 or weekendmealsonwheels.org/taste-of-wrightsville.

11/16 Holiday Market

9 a.m. - 3 p.m. The Burgwin-Wright House's inaugural Holiday Market will feature more than 25 booths, including artwork, handmade crafts, and local authors. Food and drink available for purchase. Admission: Free. Burgwin-Wright House & Gardens, 224 Market St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-0570 or burgwinwrighthouse.com.

11/17 Girl Scouts Winter Wonderland Holiday Craft Bazaar

1 p.m. - 5 p.m. Moose Lodge #343 is the setting for Girl Scout Troop 593's Winter Wonderland Holiday Craft Bazaar, with unique gifts, crafts, and baked goods for sale. Admission: Free. Moose Lodge, 4610 Carolina Beach Rd., Wilmington. For info: (910) 200-3563.

11/20 That Golden Girl Show: A Puppet Parody

7:30 p.m. Come watch this new production, which revisits classic moments from the legendary sitcom The Golden Girls with puppets. Admission: $24-$67. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu.

11/21 North Carolina Symphony Orchestra Concert

7:30 p.m. The North Carolina Symphony Orchestra will perform a program that includes Barber's Overture to The School for Scandal, McKay's Violin Concerto, and Copland's Symphony No. 2 "Short Symphony." Admission: $47. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or ncsymphony.org.

11/21 The Step Crew

7:30 p.m. The Step Crew combines top stars of Irish step dancing, Ottawa Valley step dancing and modern tap accompanied by fiddlers and a five-piece ensemble. Admission: $15-$75. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut St., Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or thalianhall.org.

11/23 Tidewater Camellia Club Fall Show

10 a.m. - 5 p.m. The New Hanover County Arboretum is the setting for the Tidewater Camellia Club's Fall Show & Sale, offering hundreds of flowers grown by members. There will also be displays and demonstrations and a tour of the arboretum's camellia garden. Admission: Free. New Hanover County Arboretum, 6206 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: tidewatercamelliaclub.org.

11/23 2nd Annual German Christmas Market

10 a.m. - 6 p.m. The 2nd Annual German Christmas Market will feature German food and drink, gifts and crafts, and a raffle. Admission: $3. Kids under 13 are free. St. Matthews Lutheran Church, 612 S. College Rd., Wilmington. For info: (910) 791-4582 or christkindlmarkt.stmatthewsch.org/information.

11/24 Pinocchio

2 p.m and 6 p.m. The Turning Pointe Dance Company and Wilmington Conservatory of the Arts present the children's classic Pinocchio. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third St., Wilmington. For tickets and info: cfcc.edu.

11/27 Mannheim Steamroller

3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Mannheim Steamroller Christmas has been a Christmas tradition for over 30 years.Chip Davis has created a show of Mannheim Steamroller Christmas classics with dazzling multimedia effects. Admission: $46-$95. Wilson Center, 703 N. Third Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 362-7999 or cfcc.edu.

11/28 Habitat for Humanity Turkey Trot

8 a.m. Cape Fear Habitat for Humanity's annual fundraising Turkey Trot takes place this morning in Wrightsville Beach. Run or walk the timed 5K or untimed 1K around the Wrightsville Beach Loop. Admission: $11-$40. Wrightsville Beach Park, 3 Bob Sawyer Drive. Info: wrightsvillebeachturkeytrot.com.

11/29-30 Enchanted Airlie

5 - 7 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. Take a self-guided stroll among the holiday lights and displays as local vendors provide coffee, hot chocolate, cookies and more. Admission: $30-$50. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 79807000 or airliegardens.org.

Tree Lighting

11/29

11/29 Island of Lights: Lighting of the Lake

7 p.m. Tonight's Lighting at the Lake ceremony has musical entertainment, elected officials, and an appearance from Santa. Free refreshments are also available. Admission: Free. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Atlanta Ave. and South Lake Park Blvd., Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-5507 or pleasureislandoflights.com/lighting-at-the-lake.html.

11/29 Tree Lighting and Visit with Santa

5:30 p.m. As part of the Holiday Flotilla, tonight's Tree Lighting will feature a visit from Santa in Wrightsville Beach Park. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach Park, 3 Bob Sawyer Drive. (910) 256-2120 or ncholidayflotilla.org/weekend-events/tree-lighting-visit-with-santa.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

Monday

Wrightsville Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside beach market offering a variety of fresh, locally grown produce, baked goods, plants and unique arts and crafts. Seawater Lane, Wrightsville Beach. Info: (910) 256-7925 or www.townofwrightsvillebeach.com.

Tuesday

Wine Tasting

6 p.m. – 8 p.m. Free wine tasting hosted by a wine professional plus small plate specials all night. Admission: Free. The Fortunate Glass, 29 South Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-4292 or www.fortunateglass.com.

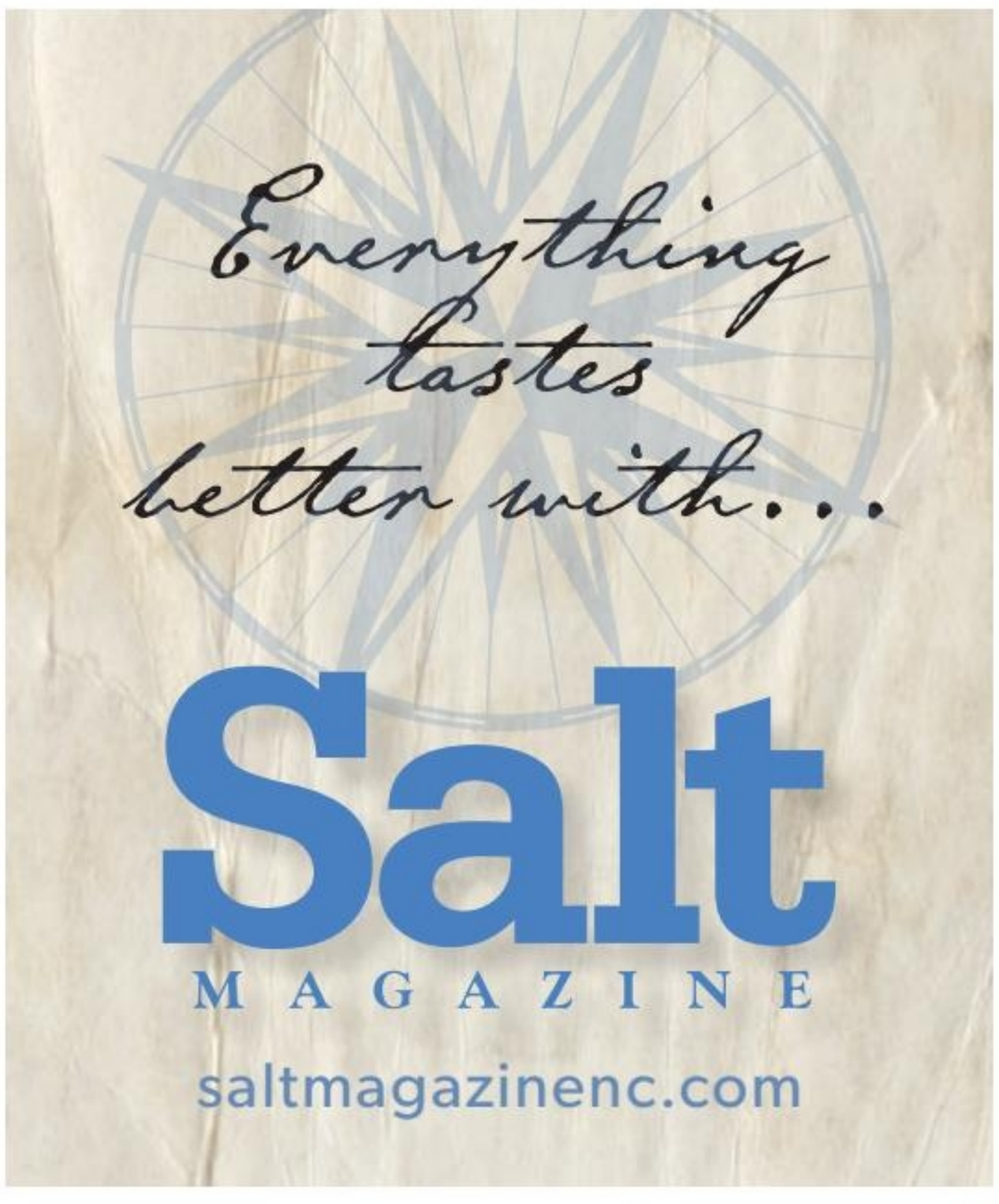
Cape Fear Blues Jam

8 p.m. A night of live music performed by the area's best Blues musicians. Bring your instrument and join in the fun. Admission: Free. The Rusty Nail, 1310 South Fifth Avenue, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-1888 or www.capefearblues.org.

Wednesday

Free Wine Tasting at Sweet n Savory Cafe

5 p.m. – 8 p.m. Sample delicious wines for free. Pair them with a meal, dessert, or appetizer and learn more about the wines of the world. Live music starts at 7. Admission: Free. Sweet n Savory Cafe, 1611 Pavilion Place, Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-0115 or www.swetnsavorycafe.com.



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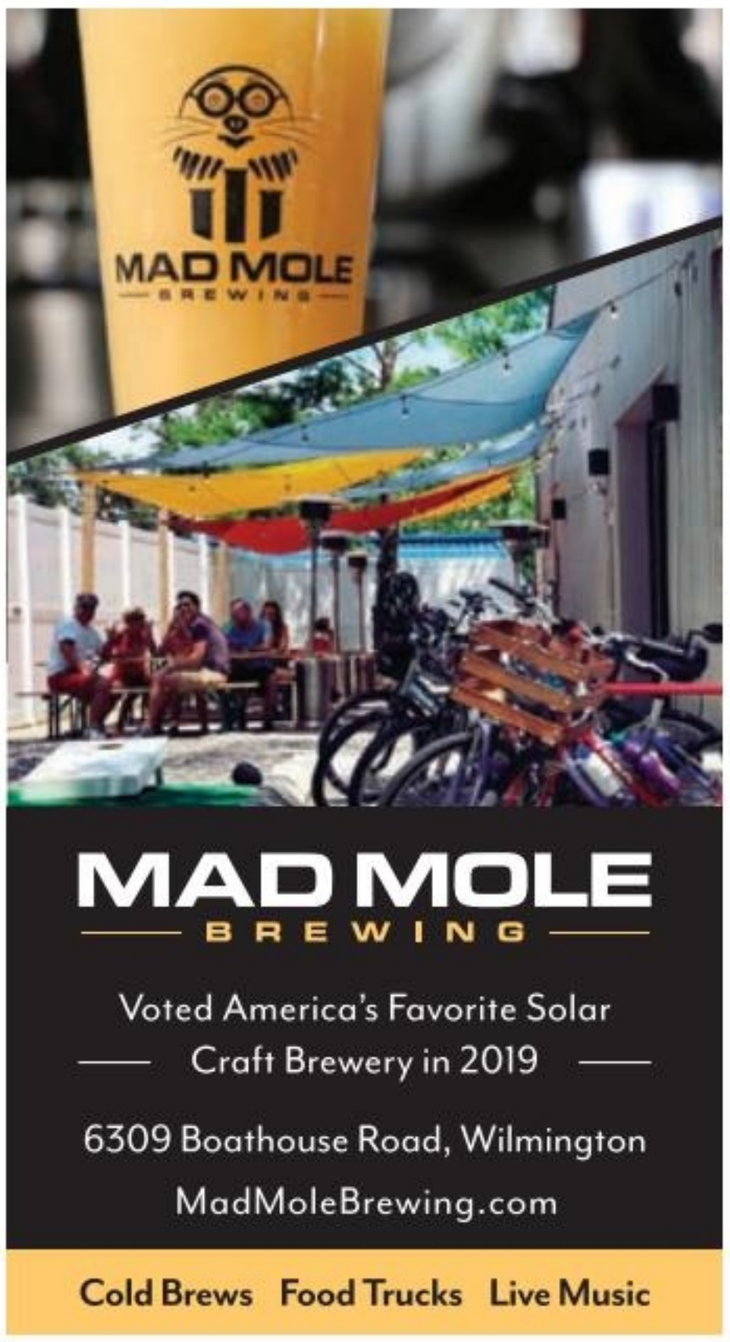

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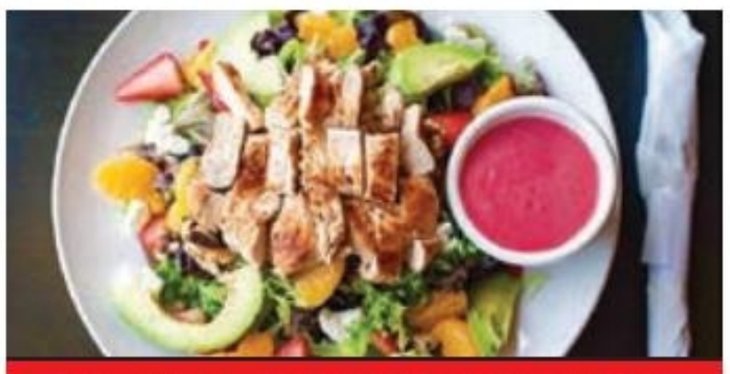

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Weekly Exhibition Tours

1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. A weekly tour of the iconic Cameron Arts Museum, featuring presentations about the various exhibits and the selection and installation process. Cameron Arts Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartsmuseum.org.

Ogden Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Local farmers, producers and artisans sell fresh fruits, veggies, plants, eggs, cheese, meat, honey, baked goods, wine, bath products and more. Ogden Park, 615 Ogden Park Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtonandbeaches.com/events-calendar/ogden-farmers-market.

Poplar Grove Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Open-air market held on the front lawn of historic Poplar Grove Plantation offering fresh produce, plants, herbs, baked goods and handmade artisan crafts. Poplar Grove Plantation, 10200 US Highway 17 North, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.poplargrove.org/farmers-market.

Thursday

Wrightsville Beach Brewery Farmer's Market

2 p.m. – 6 p.m. Come support local farmers and artisans every Thursday afternoon in the beer garden at the Wrightsville Beach Brewery. Shop for eggs, veggies, meat, honey, and handmade crafts while enjoying one of the Brewery's tasty beers. Stay for live music afterwards. Admission: Free. Wrightsville Beach Brewery, 6201 Oleander Dr., Wilmington. Info: (910) 256-4938 or www.wb-beer.com.

Yoga at the CAM

12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. Sessions are ongoing and are open to both beginners and experienced participants. Admission: $5–8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South Seventeenth Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.org.

Friday and Saturday

Cape Fear Museum Little Explorers

10 a.m. Meet your friends in Museum Park for fun, hands-on activities! Enjoy interactive circle time, conduct exciting experiments, and play games related to a weekly theme. Perfect for children ages 3 to 6 and their adult helpers. Admission: Free. Cape Fear Museum, 814 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-4370 or www.capefearmuseum.com.

Blackwater Adventure Tours

Join in an educational guided boat tour from downtown Wilmington to River Bluffs, exploring the mysterious beauty of the Northeast Cape Fear River. See website for schedule. River Bluffs, 1100 Chair Road, Castle Hayne.

Info: (910) 623-5015 or www.riverbluffsliving.com.

Saturday

Carolina Beach Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Outdoor "island-style" market featuring live music and local growers, producers and artisans selling fresh local produce, wines meats, baked goods, herbal products and handmade crafts. Carolina Beach Lake Park, Highway 421 & Atlanta Avenue, Carolina Beach. Info: (910) 458-2977 or www.carolinabeachfarmersmarket.com.

Wilmington Farmers Market at Tidal Creek

8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Weekly gathering of vetted vendors with fresh produce straight from the farm. Sign up for the weekly newsletter for advanced news of the coming weekend's harvest. 5329 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. For info: thewilmingtonfarmersmarket.com.

Riverfront Farmers' Market

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artisans, crafters and live music along the banks of the Cape Fear River. Riverfront Park, North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 538-6223 or www.wilmingtondowntown.com/events/farmers-market.

Taste of Downtown Wilmington

2:15 p.m., 2:45 p.m., & 3:15 p.m. A weekly gourmet food tour by Taste Carolina, featuring some of downtown Wilmington's best restaurants. Each time slot showcases different food. See website for details. Admission: $55–75. Riverwalk at Market Street, 0 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (919) 237-2254 or www.tastecarolina.net/wilmington/.

Port City People

Riverfest 2019

Saturday, October 5, 2019

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Port City People

6th Annual Nourish NC Gala

Coastline Convention Center

Saturday, September 21, 2019

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Kristin & Christopher Behm

Gary & Ellen Gearding, Kyle Pressma, Betsy & Damien Rudolph, Anna Pressma Rudolph

Benjamin & Jennifer Wiles

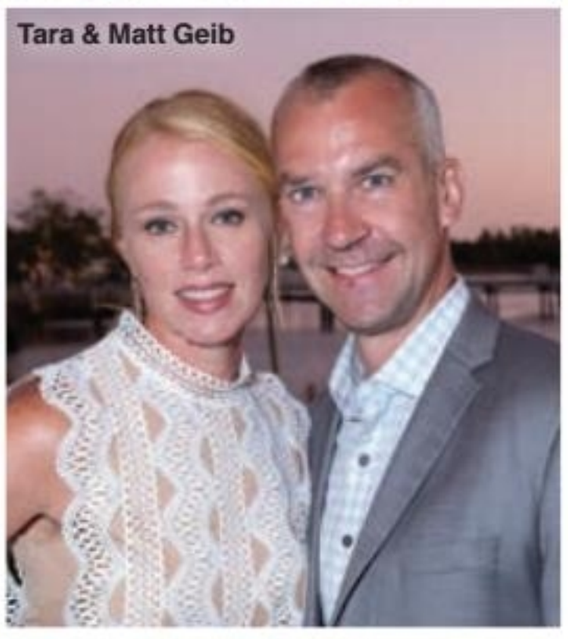
Chris & Emily Reavill

Patrick & Alison Brien, Karen & Parker Davis

Jorsan & Tony McEwen

Jamie & David James, Stephanie & Earl Adams

Molly Brodbeck, Justin Tuttle, Crystal Burlingame


Tara & Matt Geib

Matt Richter, Mike & Caroline Montgomery

Kate & Brian Groat, Chris & Regina Cox

Christina Greene, Angela Williamson

Port City People

2019 Champions for Children Gala "Hollywood Night of Lights"

Presented by the Community Boys and Girls Clubs of Wilmington honoring the legacy of Windell Daniels

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Clay & Helen Brumbaugh, Dorothy & Tracy McCullen, Bo Dean

Zachary Price

Tonya Pitts, Francis Weller

Wilma Daniels, Dr. Johnson Akinleye

Girard & Tracey Newkirk

Amy & Brad Linberg

Thomas & Lisa Hill, Christy & Philip Brown

Jan & Ken Sarvis

Yvonne Smith, Elizabeth Bryant

Aquasia Carr

Deral Pitts

Phil & Natalie Clark

Port City People

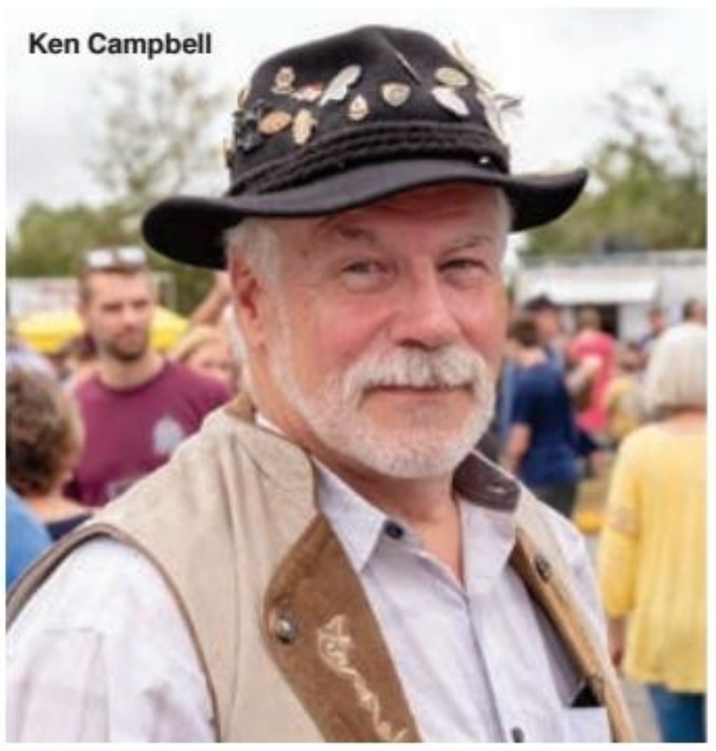
3rd Annual Oktoberfest Under the Bridge

Saturday, October 5, 2019
at Waterline Brewing Company

Photographs by Bill Ritenour

Taylor Wood, Nick Houghton

Terra, Ryker, Mila & Nathan Rohn


Ken Campbell

Hannelore Philipp, Ken Macior

Harbour Towne Fest Band

Joe White, Erica Miller

Brad & Cecilia Outland

Josh Johnson, Lloyd & Carol Reynolds, Jenn Johnson

Frank & Peggy Popelars

Brooke Stewart

Kim & Mark Anthony Mueller

Gob(ble)-smacked!

The universe serves up a cosmic feast this November

By Astrid Stellanova

An astral shout-out to Turkey, NC!

Then, let's time-travel to 1621 to the first Thanksgiving ever. Now, before we set the table with those stubborn ol' things called facts, here's what my third-grade teacher swore up and down was the historical truth: Those Pilgrims boiled the turkey and roasted the duck, serving up eel, cod and clams, too. Savory pudding of hominy for a side and a pudding of Indian corn meal with dried whortleberries. They gave us more than a holiday. Mayflower descendants include Julia Child, Clint Eastwood, Dick Van Dyke and Marilyn Monroe. Remember, Star Children, when you want to strangle your cousin after the pumpkin pie, at least one turkey gets pardoned every Thanksgiving.

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)
There's an old saying at our house: It's never good for the turkeys when pigs choose the holiday menu. A pal in your circle has been guilty of promoting their own interests over yours. They don't even realize how much this might hurt your friendship, so call them out. It started in innocence. Let it end there, too, Sugar.

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)
Lordamercy, bad news! You just tested Jell-O-positive. Why in the round world are you being such a chicken? Remember who raised you, stand up against the bullies, the meanies and even the monsters under the bed. This, too, shall pass.

Capricorn (December 22–January 19)
Here's some can't-miss advice. Don't diss his Mama . . . remember, he loves that crazy woman. Time to put the shut to the up-and-smile like you just got voted most likely to succeed, Sugar. 'Cause if you can do this, you are most definitely gonna catch a sweet whiff of that thing called success.

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)
Yasssirreee, you flung yourself into change and stretched. What's next — buying a blue apron and auditioning as Flo for a Progressive ad? Think of your health, Sweet Thing, cause you are not that kind of a sap. You are a different kind altogether.

Pisces (February 19–March 20)
Pop a can of Beanie Weenies and call it a picnic. You showed up, brought what you had, and even if your contribution wasn't finger-lickin' fried chicken, you did what you could. Sometimes, poor folks just got poor ways of doing, like my Mama said.

Aries (March 21–April 19)
You stand to gain if everything goes your way. But there is a weather event on the horizon, so to speak, that might or might not involve crazy-making s@#t storms. There is still time for you to decide if you want to stick around and find out.

Taurus (April 20–May 20)
You just won a world medal for backtracking. Everybody changes their mind, but there's a possibility you just plain lost yours. Look at the story that you are laying down now versus then. Not everybody is picking up what you laid on 'em, Sugar.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)
Beware of purses big enough to hide an axe — and one carrying one. You may think nobody noticed a little double-crossing that went down, but, hell-o, they sure did. It pays for you to stay low for at least long enough for them to blow off steam.

Cancer (June 21–July 22)
Get away from the fan when things hit. What started unwinding last month is not done, and you are near to the epicenter. You could or could not be directly involved, but you got the whiff of some nasty business by standing too close.

Leo (July 23–August 22)
Look me in the eye and tell me water ain't wet. That's right. I'm going to be like Mabel Madea Simmons: Here's some truth-telling. Surely you already know the best direction for your life is not getting in line with a bunch of rabid lemmings.

Virgo (August 23–September 22)
You two just go together like taters and gravy. That's why when your buddy calls you are all in, every time. Enjoy this fun because there's a sweet old karmic relationship at work here that you have earned and you definitely need.

Libra (September 23-October 22)
Grandpa loves to say it ain't in their best interest for turkeys to vote for Thanksgiving. When it comes to making changes, be sure it is for the greater good, Honey. Check your mule tracks and be sure you like where you've been.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Candy Hierarchy

All sweets aren't born equal

By Susan S. Kelly

Did you come by my house on Halloween? You know, the one with no pumpkin on the stoop, no lights on, and a Grinch upstairs watching Netflix behind the shutters? I loathe Halloween, and with grown children, am now able to confess as much.

I do, however, love candy, and since you're still picking Nestlé Crunch wrappers from your children's pockets or out of your dryer lint trap, now seems as good as time as any for a little treatise on the topic.

Blaming a parent for obsessions — never mind neuroses — is always convenient. I grew up in an era when mothers thought nothing of buying six packs of candy bars for dessert, the same way they thought nothing of serving syrupy pineapple slices straight from a Del Monte can. Hence my first true love: Black Cow suckers, which, tragically, are nearly impossible to find these days.

I like Common Candy. By "common," I mean common to convenience store aisles. Caramel Creams. Tootsie Rolls. Tootsie Roll Pops. Sugar Daddies. BB Bats. Kits. I like the cheap stuff, the fake stuff. And while my preferences are common, they're not as common as my husband's, who'll actually buy and eat those jellied things called Orange Slices. Again, blame the previous generation.

As a child among a dozen first cousins at their lake house, my husband's grandfather took the passel of them each day to the gas station and let them pick out a piece of candy. If that ain't cheap entertainment, I don't know what is, and I plan to do the same thing with my grandchildren as soon as they get enough teeth in their head to rot. One friend has a candy drawer in her kitchen especially for her grandchildren. Now, *that* falls in the Great Grandparent category, beating Tweetsie Railroad or some old butterfly garden like a drum. Plus, I know where the drawer is.

Like Mikey in the old Life cereal advertisements, my husband will eat anything even slightly candy-like, including peppermints. The only people who consider peppermints candy and not breath mints are children with candy canes at Christmas. I had a boarding school friend who ate Mentos like popcorn. I can still see her putting her thumb in the roll and wedging one out. Mentos are not candy. They were precursors to Tic Tacs. Peppermints are desperation candy in the same way that my sister thinks meatloaf is Depression food. Then again, I absolutely love meatloaf, which means that I keep a bowl of peppermints available for my husband. Each to his own tastes.

Has anyone ever even *eaten* a Zero bar but me? It's a personal process. You peel off the waxy white coating with your front teeth, then the fake chocolate nougat, and finally, the peanuts, or almonds or whatever they are, after you dissolve the caramel they're embedded in. This process may explain why I can't eat M&Ms. The way I eat M&Ms, after about a dozen, my tongue has started to get raw and cracked, the way it did as a child with Sweet Tarts. Plus, milk chocolate. Eh.

Higher up on my candy food chain: Snickers. Milky Way. Mounds. Rolos. 3 Musketeers. Yup.

Beneath discussion: marshmallow peanuts and Peeps. Easter candy is a bust in general.

Sweet Tarts = not candy. Also not candy: Reese's cups. Butterfingers. Paydays. Junior Mints. Too much peanut butter, peanuts, and, again, peppermint. Still, in a pinch I'll eat most of those, the same way you'll settle for a Fig Newton if there are no real cookies around. Red Hots don't really qualify as candy either, but they definitely qualify as common. Where else but the place where I get my tires rotated could I find a vending machine that cranks out a handful of Hot Tamales for a quarter?

Seeing a pattern here? Clearly, I favor candy with taffy, teeth-pulling textures. Caramels, nougats, taffy itself, fudgy chocolate like a Tootsie Roll, Laffy Taffy. Milk Duds. Bit-O-Honey. Starburst in a pinch.

I totally do not get Skittles, but I'll buy a Costco jar the size of those things pink pickled eggs are usually found in if it's filled with Jelly Bellys.

But Jolly Ranchers? I'm not much on hard candy. Hard candy is for colonoscopy prep.

Fancy-pants products from "chocolatiers" are trying too hard. Just keep your Toblerone and Godiva. Riesens are as upscale as I get. Nor have I ever understood Necco wafers, Pez, or Valentine hearts. Why not just eat chalk? Same thing for those elastic band necklaces strung with pastel candy discs that you eat while wearing it, though I admire the concept.

You know that friend with the candy drawer? She keeps all her Halloween candy corn that's gone rock hard for me. I love the stuff, and candy just doesn't get any more common. So don't think poorly of my October 31 antipathy. My attitude concerns the costumes, not the candy. Besides, I just love All Saints Day on November 1. Almost as much as I love Cow Tales.

Susan S. Kelly is a blithe spirit, author of several novels, and a proud grandmother.

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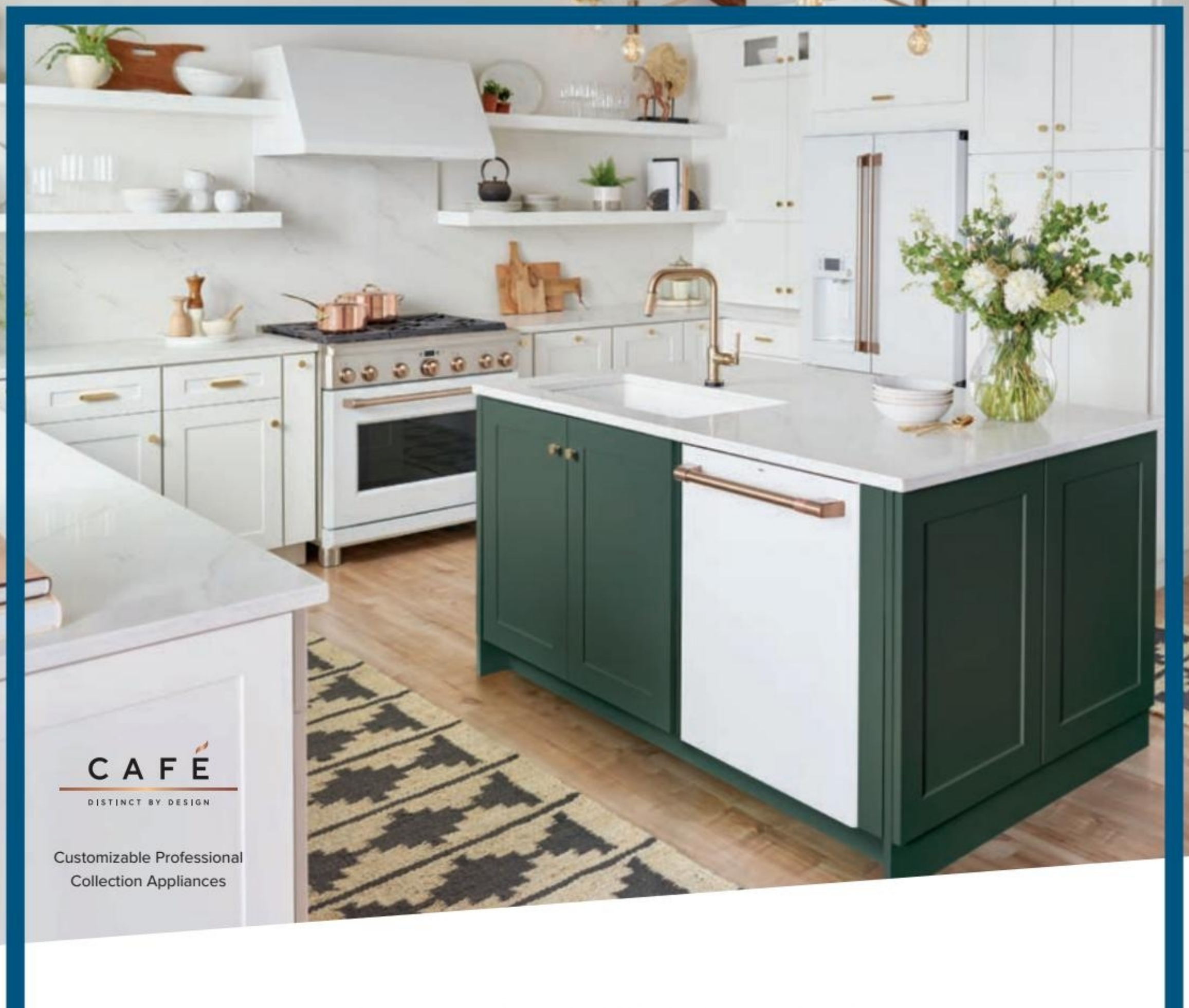

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